Chronicles Of Absurdia

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Dedication

To my wife, Thomas, who has been my best friend since the day we met.

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Introduction

Welcome to the "Chronicles of Absurdia," a series of essays that delve into the peculiarities and paradoxes of everyday life. These chronicles are a journey into the heart of the absurd, where the mundane meets the bizarre, and the ordinary becomes extraordinary. Originally, this series was meant to be crafted as a regular newsletter, a daily exploration into our highly nuanced world with meticulously crafted long-form essays. However, the depth and richness of the topics soon demanded a more expansive treatment, evolving these snippets of thought into comprehensive weekly feature articles.

My approach is to blend thought-provoking insights with a touch of whimsy, guiding you gently towards a path of incremental betterment. At the core of my content is a theme that resonates deeply with the curious and the contemplative: recognizing and appreciating life's absurdities. "Chronicles of Absurdia" goes beyond mere observation; we delve into the heart of the unexpected, the ironic, the outright bizarre elements of everyday life. I believe that in the labyrinth of life's oddities, there lie profound opportunities for growth, even if it's just one percent at a time.

Here in these carefully curated pages, instead of reporting news and drama, I prefer to revel in the wonderful absurdity of daily existence. These offerings are invitations to pause and ponder, to chuckle and reflect. As you engage with this essay series, you're embarking on a journey that celebrates the absurd, encourages you to embrace the peculiar, and subtly steers you towards small yet meaningful improvements.

In crafting these essays, I adopted an introspective tone to encourage readers to look inward and connect personally with the absurdities presented. Life's absurd moments often catch us unawares, prompting introspection and self-examination. This tone serves to deepen the engagement with the material, making the experience not just a reading exercise, but a journey of personal discovery. Humor and wit are integral to this exploration, providing a light-hearted entry point to profound philosophical inquiries and making the exploration of complex ideas accessible and enjoyable.

Each essay, while complete in itself, offers actionable advice on navigating the complex tapestry of human existence. They address a wide range of topics, from the trivial to the monumental, always with an eye

towards offering practical insights for embracing the chaos and finding meaning in the madness.

The essays in this volume are the cream of the crop from the year 2024, carefully selected for their insight, humor, and relevance to our shared human experience. Some have been adapted from previously written works to fit into this new format of essay. They are reflections on the oddities and incongruities that pepper our existence, written with the intent to not only entertain, but also enlighten. Through introspective analysis, laced with humor and wit, these writings invite readers to pause, ponder, and perhaps even laugh at the curious spectacle that is life.

This first volume doesn't offer outside reading, entirely by design. These Chronicles are meant to stand as a testament to the belief that the first step in understanding the world's absurdity is through personal reflection and observation. However, this is merely the beginning. Future installments will expand on these ideas, incorporating a broader range of sources and providing readers with a pathway for further exploration.

I invite you to open your mind to the strange, the peculiar, and the outright absurd. These essays are a gateway to seeing the world from a unique perspective, one that finds wonder and insight in the unpredictability

of life. Let us embark on this journey together, with curiosity as our guide and humor as our companion.

Recognizing the Absurdity of Life

Chronicles of Absurdia is all about recognizing the absurdities of life. This concept hinges on the conflict between our human tendency to seek inherent value and meaning in life and the cold, indifferent universe that offers no clear answers. We must then realize that our quests for meaning often lead to paradoxes and contradictions. Life itself can be absurd because it's unpredictable and uncontrollable. It quite often defies the logic and order we try to impose upon it. So, this is why it's paramount that we see how the absurd manifests in daily life. It's not just a philosophical idea, but a practical reality that we encounter regularly.

Acknowledging life's absurdity is crucial for navigating its complexities with resilience and grace. Instead of succumbing to despair or nihilism, recognizing the absurd can empower us to live more authentically and flexibly. Such acknowledgment doesn't mean giving up on finding meaning. It simply means accepting that our pursuits in and of themselves are fraught with absurdities. We must accept, and even embrace, the unpredictability and chaos as part of the human

experience, allowing us to face life with a sense of humor and a readiness to adapt.

Life is replete with everyday examples of absurdity, ranging from the comically trivial to the profoundly unsettling. These can be simple, like the irony of traffic jams when each individual is rushing to save time, or more complex, like the paradox of technology meant to connect us, often isolating us instead. This series will present anecdotes and examples from various aspects of life, illustrating how absurdity is woven into the fabric of our existence. These stories not only highlight the inherent contradictions and unexpected turns of daily life, but also demonstrate how recognizing and appreciating these absurdities can add depth and color to our understanding of the human condition.

Writing Style and Tone

The introspective tone of "Chronicles of Absurdia" is no mere stylistic choice; it's chosen to make these chronicles a conduit for deeper understanding and personal connection with the theme of absurdity. Introspection allows us to delve beneath the surface of life's oddities, transforming them from mere observations into profound insights. Compelling ourselves to look inwards means questioning our assumptions, confronting our fears, and laughing at the

contradictions inherent in our existence. By reflecting on personal experiences and our own internal responses to the absurd, these essays are meant to make the abstract tangible and the universal personal.

These essays are imbued with personal reflections to serve as a mirror for you to explore your own perceptions and reactions to life's absurdities. This narrative approach creates a space for readers to see their reflections in the shared experiences, bridging the gap between author and audience. Through introspection, the essays offer depth of thought, presenting the absurd not just as a surface-level anomaly but as a fundamental aspect of human existence. This depth encourages readers to look beyond the immediate laughter or confusion that absurdity often provokes, prompting a more nuanced understanding of its role and relevance in our lives.

Humor and wit are indispensable in "Chronicles of Absurdia," acting as both a buffer and a spotlight in the exploration of life’s incongruities. By tempering the weight of existential themes with humor, these essays become more accessible and engaging, transforming potential discomfort into a shared amusement. Also, humor serves as a coping mechanism for both writer and reader to confront the absurdities of life without being overwhelmed by their implications. It offers a way to

navigate the chaos and uncertainty of existence with a lighter heart, finding joy and laughter in the face of confusion and paradox.

Wit sharpens the focus on the absurd, illustrating complex ideas in a relatable and memorable manner. It cuts through the sometimes opaque density of my philosophical musings, bringing clarity and immediacy to our discussions. Through clever analogies, ironic observations, and playful language, these essays are designed to make the abstract concrete and the profound amusing, thereby deepening your engagement and understanding.

So, "Chronicles of Absurdia" is meant to have a unique voice that enhances its exploration of the absurd. Its stylistic approach facilitates a deeper, more enjoyable journey into the oddities of life, encouraging you to reflect, laugh, and learn in equal measure.

Structure and Content of Essays

The first volume of "Chronicles of Absurdia" is a collection of 25 essays, thoughtfully divided into five distinct sections, each comprising five essays. These sections are designed to guide you through various dimensions of life's absurdity. They provide insights and practical advice across a spectrum of experiences and reflections.

Overview of Sections

1. Understanding Self and Society: We delve into the intricacies of individual identity and our place within the broader social fabric. This section examines how absurdities arise in our interactions and societal structures, offering perspectives on how to understand and navigate the complexities of communal living.

2. Unlocking Personal Growth: Focusing on self-improvement and development, these essays explore the paradoxes and challenges inherent in personal growth. We address the often-contradictory nature of advice and experiences related to self-discovery and improvement.

3. Navigating Challenges and Adversity: Here, our focus shifts to the trials and tribulations that life throws our way. We discuss strategies for dealing with setbacks, failures, and the seemingly insurmountable obstacles that pepper our existence.

4. Creativity and Innovation: This section celebrates the role of creativity and innovative thinking in confronting and making sense of life's absurdities. We muse about how thinking outside the box can lead to novel solutions and fresh perspectives on old problems.

5. Practical Wisdom for Everyday Life: These essays provide guidance on applying the lessons of absurdity

to daily living. They aim to equip you with tools and strategies for navigating the mundane and extraordinary aspects of day-to-day life with wisdom and humor.

Each essay, while rooted in philosophical musings, is crafted with a clear intent to provide actionable advice. They aim to bridge the gap between abstract thought and practical application, ensuring you can find tangible takeaways to implement in their lives. From tips on improving interpersonal relationships to strategies for fostering creativity, the essays offer a plethora of insights and directives that are both thought-provoking and immediately useful.

The conclusion of each essay is designed to encourage further reflection, leaving you with poignant thoughts or questions to ponder. These closing remarks are more than just summaries; they're intended to deepen the reader's engagement with the topic, challenging you to see beyond the surface absurdities to the underlying lessons and opportunities for growth and understanding.

By traversing these five sections, you'll be taken on a comprehensive journey through the landscape of life's absurdities, equipped with the knowledge and tools to navigate the chaos with a sense of purpose and a smile.

Educational Journey and Future Installments

These first twenty-five essays in "Chronicles of Absurdia" are meant to serve as a foundational journey into the complex and often bewildering terrain of life's absurdities. They're designed to spark curiosity and provoke thought, offering a primer on how to perceive and interact with the world in a way that acknowledges its inherent contradictions and chaos. But, this series isn't just about exploring absurdities for their own sake. It's about using the insights we gain through this exploration as a springboard for deeper understanding and personal growth.

While the current volume stands alone with its insights derived from personal reflection and observation, it intentionally limits the inclusion of outside reading to keep the focus on foundational concepts and personal engagement. However, this is merely the beginning of a broader educational journey. Future installments will gradually introduce external sources, including philosophical texts, scientific research, and literature, to enrich the discussion and provide a more comprehensive view of the topics at hand. This approach aims to build on the personal and introspective nature of the initial essays, offering readers a pathway to expand their knowledge and understanding through a

curated selection of further reading that directly relates to and enhances the themes explored.

As the series progresses, which will be included in future volumes of “Chronicles,” the essays will delve into more complex and nuanced discussions of absurdity in various facets of life, drawing from a wider array of disciplines and perspectives. The inclusion of external references will serve to deepen the dialogue, allowing readers to explore the multifaceted nature of absurdity in greater depth.

Future essays won’t only reflect on personal and societal absurdities, but will also examine how these concepts intersect with broader cultural, philosophical, and scientific discussions. This evolution will provide a more layered and textured understanding of the absurd, encouraging readers to engage with the material on multiple levels and from various angles.

Conclusion

In summary, "Chronicles of Absurdia" is set to be an evolving series that grows in depth and breadth with each installment. This initial volume lays the groundwork for an ongoing exploration of life’s absurdities, setting the stage for future essays that promise to challenge, enlighten, and inspire readers to

embrace the inherent absurdity of the human condition with curiosity, humor, and wisdom.

Journeying through the absurd landscapes of life is both an enlightening and entertaining endeavor. As we traverse through the various themes and narratives, the series not only seeks to uncover the humor and peculiarity of our existence but also to offer a deep, reflective insight into how we navigate the world. This collection of essays serves as a testament to the rich tapestry of human experience, marked by its inherent contradictions and unforeseeable twists.

The goal of these essays is twofold: to shed light on the absurdities that permeate our lives and to provide a means through which we can appreciate and even revel in them. By presenting life's absurd moments in a manner that's thoughtful yet accessible, "Chronicles of Absurdia" invites you to engage with their own experiences in a way that's both critical and joyful.

This series is just the beginning of a larger conversation, one that will evolve with each subsequent edition, offering new insights and reflections on the ever-changing panorama of life. "Chronicles of Absurdia" is more than a collection of essays; it's an ongoing narrative that celebrates the unpredictable, sometimes incomprehensible, yet always fascinating journey that life offers.

So, grab your favorite beverage, settle into your favorite reading place, and let these “Chronicles” be your guide to discovering joy in the oddities of life and the potential for growth in the seemingly trivial. Welcome to “Chronicles of Absurdia,” where absurdity and improvement coalesce beautifully in the context of the everyday.

~ Amelia Desertsong

Opting Out Of The Con

In everyday life, each of us often stumbles upon scenes so profoundly absurd that they could only belong to the great tragicomedy that is human existence. If you will, picture a street bustling with people, each participant unknowingly playing their part in a spectacle of grand illusions. Among them, a street magician, confidently wrong, yet commanding the unwavering attention of his audience with nothing but a deck of cards and a well-practiced smile.

Not far off, a viral internet challenge sweeps through smartphones. This leads scores of individuals to perform acts that defy common sense, all for the fleeting promise of digital fame. These vignettes serve as mere appetizers to the feast of folly that surrounds us. Our world has become painted with the broad strokes of hubris, empty promises, shiny novelties, and a collective obsession with superficial ideals. In this world, the absurdity of this whimsical farce we call “Real Life” shines brightly. Sadly, few of us have eyes clear enough to see it for what it is.

For those of you new to my musings, welcome to the Chronicles of Absurdia, my ongoing essay series dedicated to exploring, understanding, and, above all, appreciating the ludicrous pageant that unfolds around

us daily. Through introspection, humor, and a few dashes of wit, we'll navigate the endless odyssey of human gullibility. The territory to explore today: our collective susceptibility to the charms of charlatans, the allure of unattainable ideals, and our own towering hubris. This exploration isn't for the faint of heart, though; it demands confronting the uncomfortable truth that confidence artists indeed run this world. But, it's not because they possess any genuine magic. Sadly, we as the audience are so eager to believe in their illusions.

Fortunately, once we come to this realization, there lies a silver lining: the choice to see beyond the façade. I find myself in Vermont, removed from the ceaseless churn of society's spectacle, contemplating the absurd with my wife by my side. The decision not to become a purveyor of falsehoods, not to see people as mere stepping stones to personal gain, was as much a rejection of the globalized charade as it was an embrace of a different kind of existence. One might wonder, what else can we do when faced with the absurdity of it all?

Through this edition of Chronicles of Absurdia, we will seek answers to this very question. So, I invite you on a journey to laugh, reflect, and perhaps find some much needed comfort in the shared absurdity of our human condition.

The Charlatans' Paradise

Within the first quarter of the twenty-first century, our world has transformed into what can only be described as a Charlatans' Paradise. Here the currency is confidence — real or feigned — and the reigning monarchs are those who can spin the most captivating tales with the least substance. So, let's delve into the heart of this paradoxical kingdom, where truth is often stranger than fiction, and the absurd is the rule rather than the exception.

The first thing to keep in mind on this expedition is that the essence of a charlatan's allure lies not in what they offer but in how they offer it. With grand gestures and eloquent words, they paint pictures of worlds that can be ours—if only we believe hard enough and follow blindly enough. Such is the modern alchemy, turning baseless promises into gold. Nowhere is this more evident than in the political arenas and the digital realms where influencers reign supreme. In these spheres of influence, conviction can easily override truth, and popularity can dictate reality for those who fail to define their own.

Consider just how many political figures promise to mend the fractures of a divided society with words that echo the deepest desires of their audience, yet their

actions sow the seeds of further discord. Let's also consider the horde of social media influencers who, armed with nothing but a camera and a smile, convinces thousands of gullible minds that happiness is just a purchase of a product away. These are the magicians of our time, their magic rooted in the art of persuasion. Their stages are built upon the foundation of human vulnerability—the longing to believe in something, anything, that offers a semblance of hope or joy.

This domain is populated by a zany and colorful cast of characters each contributing to the grand illusion. Fortunately for our studies, they all tend to fall into three camps. There are the zealots, whose fervent belief in their chosen charlatan grants legitimacy to the absurd. We have the skeptics, who see through the veil but often find themselves drowned out by the chorus of believers. Finally we have the bystanders, those who watch the spectacle unfold with a mixture of amusement, confusion, and more than not, despair.

Amidst this cacophony of conviction and contradiction, I often find myself as an observer at the fringe of the spectacle. Yet, even I, your witty tour guide through this strange world, am not entirely immune to their wiles. Even I who pen these words of warning now have been taken for hours at a time by digital performers whose sleight of hand was so convincing, so seamless,

that for a moment, I too believed in the possibility that their magic was a dark art worth learning for myself. These were harmless deceptions, for the most part, tricks of light and sound. But over time, the formula became clear to me, and the content grew increasingly stale. This realization revealed a profound truth about the nature of belief and the power of perception. It also made me realize how foolish even the best and the brightest among us can be in moments of weakness.

The Charlatans' Paradise thrives on the innate human propensity to seek something to believe in that's greater than ourselves. This is both our greatest strength and our most exploitable weakness. The human spirit is endlessly searching for meaning and connection in a world that often seems devoid of both. While it's the key to our collective curiosity and sense of wonder, it's also our greatest vulnerability that charlatans of all stripes exploit, weaving illusions that dazzle, enchant, and ultimately, deceive us for their own benefit.

As we navigate this paradise of paradoxes, the question becomes not how to avoid being deceived. After all, such a feat may be impossible in a world where illusions are as common as air. Rather, we must discover how to appreciate the absurdity of the deception without becoming its victim. So, we must requires ourselves to view the world with both a critical eye and a sense of

humor. While the charlatans may hold the stage for now, their next act is yet to be written.

Understanding the Hubris of Humanity

At the heart of our collective susceptibility to the grand illusions spun by the charlatans of our world, the most potent and often overlooked ingredient is hubris. This is an ancient Greek concept, denoting excessive pride or self-confidence. The term has traversed centuries, morphing into a fundamental trait of the human condition. Hubris of what blinds us to our vulnerabilities, convinces us of our invincibility, and, most ironically, leads us into the arms of those very deceptions to which we smugly thought ourselves immune. On this leg of our expedition, we peer into the mirror of our collective soul, revealing the reflection of hubris and its role in the comedy of human errors.

Tales of hubris are as old as time itself, yet they still freshly resonate in the modern age. History is replete with empires that crumbled under the weight of their own arrogance, and leaders whose fall was precipitated by their unwavering belief in their own infallibility. Today, this hubris isn't confined to the annals of history or the corridors of power. It now permeates the very fabric of our daily lives like a venomous poison. Hubris manifests in the businessman who

underestimates his competition, in the investor who believes she can outsmart the market, and in the ordinary individual who thinks they are beyond the reach of the charlatans' tricks.

Now, our digital age, with its echo chambers and filter bubbles, has only amplified this trait, creating environments that reinforce our preconceptions and shield us from dissenting perspectives. Within these echo chambers, our beliefs are rarely properly challenged, our incomplete views barely questioned, and our hubris grows unchecked. This is fertile ground for the charlatans, who exploit these spaces, tailoring their illusions to our inflated sense of self.

But, what drives this hubris engine? At its core, this sense of pride is a defense mechanism, a shield against the uncertainties and insecurities that plague the human condition. We cling to our beliefs and convictions, however unfounded, because they provide a semblance of control in an inherently chaotic and unpredictable universe. Our hubris tells us that we are the protagonists of our own story, invulnerable to the follies that befall others, a narrative that is as comforting as it is dangerous.

So, what actionable advice can we derive from this realization? Well, to start, I can tell you that self-awareness and humility are essential virtues in the battle

against our own hubris. To cultivate these traits, we must first acknowledge our fallibility, accepting that we are, by nature, prone to error and deception. This acceptance doesn't diminish us, but rather, it opens the door to genuine growth and understanding.

Practically, this means seeking out and listening to voices that challenge our perspectives. We must invest significant time to self-reflection, and it's imperative to learn the humility to admit when we're wrong. Intelligence and wisdom are not vaccines against deception, but they are valuable tools that, if wielded with humility, can help navigate the treacherous waters of the Charlatans' Paradise.

Moving forward, let's remember that hubris isn't a flaw to be eradicated. Rather, it's a part of the human experience to be understood and managed. Calling ourselves to humility in the face of our own imperfections is the first line of defense against these charlatans. In recognizing and confronting our own hubris, we can begin to properly shield ourselves from the allure of charlatans. For us to reconnect more deeply than ever with the essence of our shared humanity, we must forge a path forward grounded not in the arrogance of invincibility, but in the wisdom of vulnerability.

The Allure of Superficial Ideals

Next, we must tackle our relentless pursuit of superficial ideals. Let's now draw back the curtain on our obsession with the external, the ephemeral, and the extrinsic. We'll explore how this fixation not only feeds into the absurdity of our existence, but also serves as fertile ground for the charlatans who exploit our desires for their own gain.

Our world is saturated with images and narratives that glorify wealth, beauty, fame, and power as the pinnacle of achievement and happiness. These superficial ideals, perpetuated by media, advertising, and the digital echo chambers of social media, create a mirage of a life that's always just out of reach, a horizon that recedes as we approach it. The irony, of course, is that in chasing these ideals, we often bypass the very experiences and connections that offer genuine fulfillment.

The allure of these superficial ideals lies in their promise of quick fixes and instant gratification. They whisper to us that happiness can be bought, that esteem can be measured in likes and followers, and that success is visible in the material symbols we accumulate. This is the playground of the modern charlatans. Influencers sell not just products but lifestyles. Politicians peddle oversimplified solutions to complex problems. Gurus offer supernatural enlightenment at a premium price point.

All these sly con artists know well that superficiality is a siren song that's hard to resist when it echoes our deepest insecurities and desires.

Yet, this pursuit is inherently absurd; it's a Sisyphean endeavor leaving us perpetually unsatisfied, always craving the next thing that promises to fill the void. It's capitalism taken to its ugliest extreme. The absurdity, however, isn't in our desire for beauty, success, or recognition; after all, these are natural human inclinations. The fault lies in our belief that their attainment in their most superficial forms can grant us lasting happiness and fulfillment.

Resisting the pull of superficial ideals begins with asking ourselves difficult questions about what we truly value and why. We must reflect on the sources of our desires, and on the impact of our pursuits on our sense of self and our relationships with others. It requires us to differentiate between what we want and what we are told we should want, a distinction that is crucial in navigating the landscape of modern absurdity.

Promoting the value of authenticity and depth involves not just a personal reckoning, but a communal one, as well. We must celebrate diversity in all its forms, recognize the beauty in imperfection, and value people for their character and actions rather than their adherence to societal standards of success. Human

connections must be rooted in genuine interest and empathy rather than transactions and status.

Shifting away from superficial ideals doesn't mean rejecting of the desire to improve oneself or to seek success. Rather, we must reorient our hearts and minds towards values that offer deeper, more satisfying connections with nature and those around us. Eschewing the absurd chase for external validation, we must instead find joy in the journey of self-discovery, in the richness of real human relationships, and in the pursuit of our innermost passions.

While navigating the tempestuous seas of superficial ideals, we must remember that the anchor of authenticity holds us steady. We must redefine success on our own terms, seek beauty in the real and the flawed, and to discover happiness in the depths rather than the surfaces of life. In doing so, we both inoculate ourselves against the charms of the charlatan and find our way back to what it means to live a fulfilled and meaningful life.

How Do We Opt Out of the Con?

As charlatans beckon from every corner and superficial ideals hang like mirages on the horizon, there exists a path less trodden. That is the path of refusal, of opting out of the grand con. This was my personal choice,

choosing not to become a confidence artist in a world where deceit often seems like the shortest path to success. As we wrap up today's tour through Absurdia, let's explore the values that guided me to this choice. Learn from the peace I've found that comes from living in accordance with my own principles, even as the spectacle of society's illusions continues unabated.

My decision to opt out wasn't made in a vacuum, but in the noisy marketplace of digital marketing, where every stall peddles its own brand of snake oil. The realization that I could manipulate, deceive, and exploit the gullibilities of others for personal gain was a crossroads moment. The path of the charlatan was laid out before me, paved with the promise of wealth, power, and prestige. Yet, embarking on this path would mean viewing others not as fellow travelers and wanderers, but as resources to be mined, their hopes and fears tools to be wielded for personal gain.

Choosing integrity over expediency, authenticity over artifice, is a choice that doesn't come without great costs. It means foregoing the easy accolades of those seduced by the superficial, accepting that genuine respect and connection are earned slowly and with effort. It involves deep commitment to seeing people as ends in themselves, not means to an end. This is a life defining

principle that stands in stark contrast to the ethos of the confidence artist.

My advice for those who wish to join in opting out of the con is rooted in self-reflection and agape. This means defining your values and principles through a painstaking process that requires honest introspection and a willingness to question not just the world around us but our place within it. What do we value? What legacy do we wish to leave? How do we define success? The answers to these questions become the compass by which we navigate the temptations and challenges of our world, which is currently far too enamored with illusion.

Living by these values means making choices that aren't always easy but that are always conscious. Seek out and cultivating relationships with individuals and communities that share a commitment to authenticity and integrity. Be prepared to stand apart, to speak out against the tide of superficiality and deception, even when doing so is uncomfortable or unpopular.

Trust me when I say that the rewards of opting out are profound. They are found in the peace that comes from living a life aligned with one's deepest convictions, in the fulfillment derived from meaningful work and relationships, and in the resilience that comes from facing the world with open eyes and an open heart. This peace doesn't mean the absence of conflict or challenge,

as it will still find its way to knock at your doorstep more often than you'd prefer. However, I gain inner peace from the deep-seated knowledge that I'm living truthfully, contributing to the now often hidden world that values substance over appearance, depth over superficiality.

As we watch from our haven in Vermont, far removed yet deeply connected to the world's unfolding drama, my wife and I see our choice to opt out of the con as a source of strength. Amidst the collapse of societal ideals and the relentless noise of the charlatans' promises, we've found there remains a quiet space for those who choose a different, more calmly considered path. This space isn't defined by withdrawal or cynicism, but by a hope grounded in the solid realities of human decency, empathy, and the enduring search for meaning.

In opting out of the con, we find not isolation but a deeper connection to the truths that underpin our existence. We discover that the most profound absurdity is not in the world's folly but in the notion that we are powerless to choose a different way. These Chronicles of Absurdia, then, aren't just a commentary on the world's absurdities, but a testament to the possibility of living differently, with eyes wide open and hearts undimmed by cynicism. This is a journey we undertake together, whether we realize it at first or not. Whenever circumstances around us take a turn for the worse, we

must remind ourselves that in the face of overwhelming absurdity, our greatest act of defiance is to live authentically. We must face the chaos head-on with humor, grace, and an unwavering commitment to what's real and true.

Closing Thoughts

As we draw the curtain on this odyssey through Absurdia, we find ourselves standing at the edge of a vast and intricate landscape. Our quest thus far has been a tale threaded with human folly, ambition, and a relentless quest to find meaning in our existence. These travels through such a landscape of absurdity — marked by the spectacles of charlatans, snares of hubris, illusions of superficial ideals, and the quiet rebellion of opting out — has been both a critique and a celebration of the human condition.

But, recognizing life's inherent absurdity should not lead us to despair, but instead foster a deeper appreciation for the beauty and richness that exists within this chaos. In fact, if we pay attention, it can be in the most mundane moments — the laughter shared over a meal, the warmth of a sunbeam on a chilly morning, or the unexpected kindness of a stranger — that we'll find the antidotes to the cynicism and disenchantment that the darker side of Absurdia often breeds.

In these small, everyday experiences, the absurdity of life reveals its other face: not a mocking grimace, but a knowing smile, inviting us to find joy and connection amidst disorder. It's in the pause between actions, in the silence between words, that we discover the essence of being human.

Indeed, the path through Absurdia isn't a linear one, nor is it marked by clear signposts. Instead, it's a spiral, looping back on itself, offering endless opportunities for reflection, growth, and laughter. With each turn, we're invited to view the world through a lens that magnifies both the absurdity and the wonder of our existence. My intention with these Chronicles is to serve as a guide towards viewing the universe through such a lens with greater appreciation and understanding.

In the quiet of rural Vermont, far from the madding crowd yet intimately connected to the fabric of humanity, my wife and I find a vantage point from which to observe, reflect, and ultimately, choose rebellion. The choice to embrace the absurd, to find humor in the contradictions of life, and to seek connection in the midst of isolation is perhaps the most radical act of rebellion available to us.

As we wrap up for now, my call to action isn't a call to arms, but a call to awareness. I entreat you to choose observing the world and our place within it with curiosity, skepticism, and a healthy dose of humor. I

invite you to treat the absurdity around you not as a burden but as a gift, a source of endless fascination.

Armed with the knowledge that while we may not be able to change the world's inherent absurdity, we can still choose how we engage with it. We must choose authenticity over artifice, depth over superficiality, and connection over isolation. In making these choices, we find not just solace, but joy in the shared human experience of navigating the absurd.

These Chronicles of Absurdia, therefore, are not just reflections on the absurdity of life but a celebration of the possibilities that this absurdity unveils. While modern life continues to test the resilience of the human spirit, I hope that these Chronicles will remind you of the power of humor and calm introspection. I hope that my insights will offer an unyielding light of empathy and compassion to guide us all through these trying times. For in the darkest of comedies, there's always the promise of the light returning once the play is ended. We must then go forth out of the theater of the absurd and into the greater hidden world of knowledge, peace, and understanding.

~ Amelia Desertsong, March 13, 2024

Only in the Darkness Can You See the Stars

There are plenty of quotes from Martin Luther King, Jr. that I could write about to celebrate his birthday. As I write this, I'm observing this holiday with great reflection, and no quote of his resonates with me quite like this one:

"Only in the darkness can you see the stars."
—Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

At face value, this might seem too obvious. Of course, stars are invisible under the blinding light of day. But, as we all know, MLK wasn't just a secret stargazing enthusiast — he was a master of metaphor. The weight of these words isn't at first obvious until you understand them in context.

This was a key line from his "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech. He delivered this powerful address on April 3, 1968, at the Mason Temple in Memphis, Tennessee. In this speech, he reflected on the struggle for civil rights, the challenges faced by African Americans, and the hope for a brighter future. Tragically, it would be his final public speech before his assassination the following day.

Obviously, King wasn't giving us a basic lesson in astronomy; rather, he was subtly whispering a life truth into our ears. It’s that we often miss while binge-watching life's absurd drama series. In this grand sitcom of existence, it's far too easy to get caught up in the season's plot twists, spilled coffees, the missed buses, and the 'why me?' moments.

These so-called 'dark times' are just the universe setting up the perfect backdrop for life's stars to truly emerge. It’s much like how you can't appreciate the artistry of a good sitcom without the occasional cringe-worthy episode to remind you of the high points. So, as we embark on today's introspective escapade, let's look for wisdom from the stars in our night skies. Buckle up, star gazers, it's going to be a ride filled with humor, wit, and a touch of stardust.

A Journey Through Darkness

First, let’s take King’s quote literally. Let’s say it's nighttime and you're outside, probably because Facebook is down or there’s nothing on Netflix catching your eye. So, you look up and see the stars, shining like tiny rebellious lights against the dark canvas of the infinite universe. It's a beautiful and serene sight to behold; although, if you're in a city, it's probably also hypothetical because light pollution.

Now, let's switch on the metaphorical headlights and shine our high beams on what King means by the darkness. In this context, it isn't just referring to an absence of light, the kind that vampires and moody teenagers seek perpetually. The darkness King refers to is as a symbol of our struggles and challenges. He's referring to the times when life hands us lemons, and we're fresh out of sugar to make lemonade. It encapsulates every moment we've felt lost, alone, or like we're wandering through a tunnel with a faulty flashlight.

In these moments, the 'stars' can emerge — not as celestial bodies, but as glimmers of hope, kindness, and strength. It could be unexpected help from a stranger, the friend who listens, and the small victories on otherwise brutal days. Those stars are our moments of clarity and realization. Basically, the greatest opportunities for growth often only happen when we're pushed out of our comfort zones and into the night.

King's quote, then, is a gentle reminder: when life goes dark, look for the stars. It's a call to find beauty in our struggles, to recognize that sometimes, it's the darkness that pushes us to see the light we otherwise might have

missed. It's an invitation to a cosmic party where resilience is the guest of honor, and we're all on the VIP list.

So, next time you're metaphorically stumbling in the dark, remember: the stars are out there. And hey, if all else fails, actual stargazing is pretty great, too. Just don't forget to charge your phone first — for flashlight purposes, of course.

College Night Walks

Speaking of which, at many times in my own life, I've walked around at night, looking up at the stars. This was especially true during my two years at a private college in small-town New Hampshire. At night, the campus was a setting so serene it could be the backdrop for a low-budget indie film. If I'd had a smartphone at the time, I probably would've made one; the setting was that perfect for an introspective look at college life.

There I was, a student with a penchant for nocturnal wanderings, treating the night sky as my personal IMAX theater. The stars twinkled above, offering a celestial show, and I, ever the eager audience, was all too ready to bask in their cosmic glow. But, as it turns out, not everyone shared my enthusiasm for astronomy after dark.

Enter the campus security, the ever-vigilant guardians of curfews and quiet hours. To them, my innocent stargazing was as suspicious as a raccoon in a dumpster. "Back to your dorm," they'd say, with the stern authority of a librarian enforcing silence. Their flashlights were like spotlights, turning my starlit reverie into an impromptu interrogation scene.

It was absurd, really. Here I was, trying to embrace the vastness of the universe. Yet, all they could think about was the potential for me to trip over a well-placed rock. If I wasn't back in my dorm getting drunk, high, or otherwise hammered, I wasn't doing college right. I'd pretend to heed their scolding, then soon as they were out of sight, I'd just walk off campus where they couldn't bug me.

Then, there were the town police. What a delightful contrast to the uptight campus security! They roamed the streets not with suspicion, but with a shared sense of wonder. On nights when I ventured beyond the campus boundaries, I'd find them parked on the side of the road after patrolling the sleepy town every so often. Our encounters were like scenes from a feel-good movie: they'd wave, I'd nod, and sometimes, they'd pause to gaze upwards with me.

It was as if the town outside the college campus itself had a secret understanding with the universe. The

police knew that the real threats weren't dreamers like me, looking for constellations and cosmic signs. They appreciated the quiet and peace of the night just as much as I did. In those moments, it felt like we were all part of a secret club — the Night Watchers, we'll call it — united by our appreciation for the sky's nightly performance.

This contrast was a lesson in perspectives. The campus security, bound by rules and regulations, saw a potential problem in every shadow. The town police, perhaps seasoned by years of real-world experiences, recognized the harmless pursuit of stardust dreams. It was a reminder that sometimes, to see the true beauty of the night sky, you just need to step beyond the boundaries — literal or metaphorical — that confine you.

For the campus security, I hold no grudges. After all, they were just doing their job. In fact, I felt bad for those who were berating me for such a harmless activity. Clearly, they themselves were unwilling to look up at the stars themselves and wonder any more.

So, to the town police, a heartfelt thank you for letting a starry-eyed student wander in peace, understanding that sometimes, all we really need is to look up and dream.

Learning from the Stars

The college years are often described as a time of exploration and discovery. But let's face it, they're also a breeding ground for existential crises and caffeine addictions — among worse ones. Amidst this tumultuous journey, my nightly rendezvous with the stars in the skies of New Hampshire and Massachusetts became my unexpected tutors in the art of perspective.

In New Hampshire, the stars seemed to perform just for me. There, in a town atop a hill, the night sky was a tapestry of cosmic wonders, unmarred by the glow of city lights. Each star was a puncture in the curtain of night, revealing glimmers of a bright, unknown world beyond. On evenings when the weight of term papers and the existential dread of 'what am I doing with my life?' loomed large, these stars were a soothing balm. They whispered of a universe vast and beautiful, where my term paper on 18th-century American poetry was but a speck of cosmic dust.

But in Massachusetts, the stars had to fight for their spotlight against the glare of urban living. Here, stargazing requires more effort, a metaphor for the increased complexities of my life as I navigated through upper-level classes and the ever-mounting pressure of 'the real world' waiting just around the corner. The few stars that managed to pierce through the light pollution

were like beacons of resilience, reminding me that clarity often comes through in the darkest of times, even if it's just a faint glimmer.

The contrast between the starlit skies of New Hampshire and Massachusetts mirrored my own college journey. In New Hampshire, life was simpler, and dreams felt within arm's reach, much like the vivid stars above. Massachusetts brought with it the haze of challenges, but also the lesson that even in diminished visibility, some lights still find a way to shine through. Eventually, the greatest light I found was the possibility of a full-time job, which I took over the dread of yet another professor telling me that I didn't know how to write properly — yes, that really happened and that's a topic for another letter.

It was under these star-studded skies that I learned some of life's most valuable lessons. The stars taught me about the beauty of persistence; no matter how dark the night, they never failed to appear. They taught me about hope; even on cloudy nights, I knew they were there, waiting to be seen again. Most importantly, they taught me about perspective; in the grand scheme of the cosmos, my troubles were fleeting and small.

In those quiet moments of stargazing, I found a sense of peace and a reminder that life, much like the night sky, is a complex, beautiful, and occasionally obscured phenomenon. The stars, with their distant yet

consistent glow, became my guides through the chaos of college life, teaching me that no matter how dark it gets, there's always a light waiting to be found.

Starry Reflections

The next time you look up at the stars, don't treat it just any mundane task like sorting socks or trying to remember where you left your keys. This is an invitation to a cosmic journey, right from your doorstep — or window, if you're a fan of warmth in the wintry months.

I challenge you to step outside or find a cozy spot near a window with the lights out. Let the night embrace you, and tilt your gaze upwards to the celestial dance happening above. Allow yourself time for some good old-fashioned stargazing, with a twist of introspection and a dash of existential pondering.

As you gaze at the stars, let their incandescent beauty and the sheer vastness of the universe sink in. Remember, you're looking at the light of suns far away, some of which might not even exist anymore. It's like time travel without the pesky paradoxes. Let this perspective be a gentle reminder of how vast and incredible our universe is, and how, in the grand scheme of things, our troubles might just be smaller than we perceive.

In my view, appreciating the vast near-infinity of the heavens is the only way to truly put your own life in perspective. We are much like specks of dust in even the machinations of our tiny blue and green planet, and it's only when you remind yourself of this fact that you even begin to appreciate all of Life's little blessings.

Now, think about the challenges you've faced, both now and in the past. Reflect on those moments when life felt as dense and impenetrable as a black hole. Think about how these experiences have shaped you, carved into your very being like constellations in the night sky. Every struggle, every obstacle, has contributed to the unique pattern that makes you, well, you.

But, instead of dwelling on these challenges as negative experiences, try to see them as your personal constellations. Just as constellations guide travelers and inspire stories of tradition, let your challenges be your guideposts and your stories. How have they directed your journey? What strengths have you discovered in yourself because of them?

This starry reflection is more than just looking at pretty lights in the sky. It's about finding a sense of peace and understanding in our place in the universe. Just like the stars, we too have our moments to shine, despite the darkness that sometimes surrounds us. So, take these few moments tonight to connect with the cosmos, reflect

on your journey, and maybe, just maybe, make a wish on a star. Who knows? The universe might just be listening.

Remember, dear readers: each challenge you face is not just a hurdle, but a stepping stone towards becoming one percent better, one percent wiser, and maybe one percent more absurd in the best possible way.

As you go about your day, or lay your head down tonight, don't forget to keep looking up at the stars. Let them remind you of the light that shines even in the darkest of times, and the beauty that lies in the vast, mysterious canvas of life. There's a bit of absurdity in everything we do, and a bit of light in every absurdity.

Until we meet again in these chronicles, keep embracing the journey, with all its twists, turns, and starlit revelations. Find your light in the absurdity of life, and let it guide you through the cosmos of your everyday.

With warmth and wit, and a sprinkle of stardust,
~ Amelia Desertsong, January 15th, 2024

Our Illusions of Choice and the Path to Freedom

Today we explore the depths of conscious decision-making and sifting the illusions from the realities. In the “Chronicles of Absurdia,” we unwrap the oddities of life and celebrate its peculiar charm! In today's world, we're surrounded by a carnival of choices, from 50 types of cereal to myriad career paths.

However, are these choices genuine, or just mirages in the desert of life? It's time we explore the paradox that many of our options are mere illusions, well-orchestrated plot twists to keep us engaged in the grand play of life.

Yet, amidst these mirages lies the true path to freedom. The way through is by making decisions that positively impact not just ourselves, but those around us. Let's ponder the irony that in seeking personal satisfaction through endless choices, we often find ourselves more lost than ever.

From my own life experience, I’ve learned that the real ticket to liberation is understanding that the essence of choice is not in the quantity we give or receive, but the quality. We must choose kindness, empathy, and joy over all the negativity we encounter. As we navigate this

bizarre bazaar of life, we must learn how to focus on the choices that matter.

The only choices we must ponder deeply are the ones that connect us, that make the corners of someone's mouth lift in a smile, that spread a little more light in this odd, wonderful world. Let's learn how to do this.

The Role of Ignorance and Acceptance

Before we dive into the art of making choices, we must first deal with the elephant in the room: ignorance, that blissful state where we float on clouds of unawareness, sometimes by choice, sometimes by circumstance. Ignorance allows us each to wear a pair of rose-colored glasses that conveniently blurs out the harsh realities of life. But, here's the kicker: to truly appreciate the absurdities of life, we must decide whether to snugly wear these glasses or toss them into the winds of wisdom.

With the daily parade of options we encounter every day, embracing ignorance can be like choosing the comfiest chair in a room full of thrones. It's easy, it's comfortable, and so tempting! But, as denizens of Absurdia, we must ask ourselves: does this ignorance serve us, or does it keep us shackled in dungeons of delusion? We often mistake mirages for oases, feeling

quenched for a moment, but soon we're thirstier than before.

On the other hand, it seems that rejecting ignorance is an act of rebellion in a world that's often rewarding not knowing or not caring about what you're actually doing. Well, what happens when we turn the lights on in a room that many would prefer to remain dark? While the light might be blinding at first, and what it reveals might not always be pretty, the clarity it brings is worth the discomfort. When we enlighten ourselves to the reality of things, it's much like finally noticing the strings in a puppet show — it changes the entire performance.

Now, let's talk about making wrong choices. We've all been there, standing at the crossroads of life, picking the path that looks sunny, only to end up in a thunderstorm without an umbrella. But, here's where it can get interesting; it turns out there's a hidden treasure in these missteps — the power of learning. After all, acknowledging our ignorance is our first pirouette towards wisdom.

Learning from these wrong choices requires a hearty dose of accepting our imperfections. But, acceptance doesn't signify defeat; rather, it's a courageous act of facing the music, understanding the rhythm of our errors, and choreographing a better

routine. We must find humor in our human folly, smiling at our previous ignorance, and warmly welcoming the wisdom that follows.

Embracing our ignorance doesn't mean surrendering to it; it means gearing up for a fascinating journey of discovery. When we choose to reject ignorance, we step into the role of lifelong learners, eager to correct our missteps. But what about the wrong choices we've pirouetted into? They're not mere stumbles; they're the hidden tutors of life, dressed in disguise.

Every wrong choice we make is a story, a lesson, a joke that life plays on us, and we're the punchline. But, what if we laugh along instead? What if we embrace these mistakes as part of the grand comedy? Our mistakes are simply act changes in a long, never-ending story of absurdity; whenever we take that wrong turn and get lost, we then have the opportunity to find a part of ourselves we never knew existed.

In our world of Absurdia, where choices dance around us like a troupe of jesters, the real wisdom lies in recognizing the jester's tricks. We must know when to play the fool and when to be the sage. The trick is to not actually be the fool. By accepting our ignorance of all the things we don't know and may never know, and learning from our wrong choices, we can create a path to wisdom, one absurd step at a time.

Distinguishing Important Choices From Illusory Ones

Now, choosing to cast off the cloak of ignorance and embracing our wrong turns can often feel like performing a high-wire act over a chasm of consequences without a safety net. It's a thrilling, if slightly vertiginous, experience to weigh the inconsequential, illusory choices with those monumental decisions that pivot the very axis of our lives and of those in our orbit. The scales can tip wildly depending on our mood and circumstances. So, how do we find some sort of balance?

As we journey through the maze of choices, we must strive to discern between the illusory and the impactful. We can't be distracted by the fluff of life, as it flutters around us in a myriad of colors and shapes like confetti, captivating in their momentary spectacle. These choices are like choosing the color of your toothbrush; they add a personal touch to the mundane, but rarely do they alter the course of our destiny.

These are the choices that seem as significant as choosing between paper or plastic – they might stir up a small whirlwind in the teacup of our day-to-day life, but they rarely cause a tempest in the ocean of our existence. These choices are like the background music in an elevator; they fill the space, but rarely do they compel us to jam.

Then, there are the impactful choices, the weighty, significant decisions that become the cornerstones upon which our lives are built. These are the choices that echo into our future and sometimes even into the lives of others. They're like choosing the right travel companion for a journey across unknown lands; these decisions shape not only the journey itself, but also the experiences, the challenges, and the memories that will be forged along the way.

Why do we often wrap ourselves up in the inconsequential, illusory choices? Because these decisions are so daunting, we bog ourselves down in the mundane just to put off the important stuff for tomorrow, ever pushing tomorrow further and further into the future. Sadly, eventually, we all run out of tomorrows. We resist making these choices because we fear taking wrong turns.

So, what we must choose to do instead with these significant choices is seeing wrong turns as nonchalantly as graciously accepting a detour in a road trip. Yes, we might be taken off the planned route, leading us through unexpected terrain, but along the way, we must appreciate the views we would've missed otherwise. Just like in fiction, sometimes the wrong turn can lead to the right place, or at least to a place where we learn the right lessons to set us on the right path.

Maintaining this balance between the inconsequential and life-altering choices we have on our plate requires more than just a keen eye and a pair of scales; it demands a wise heart tempered by careful consideration. We must tune in to the subtle frequencies of our inner compass, asking ourselves, "Will this choice bring a mere ripple to this moment in time, or will it send waves across the ocean of my life?"

As we voyage through this splendid, sometimes bewildering odyssey of choices, we must learn to embrace both the illusory and the impactful with equal grace, however. The illusory choices, in all their fleeting glory, exist to teach us the art of lightness, the joy of living in the moment. Meanwhile, the impactful choices, with their weight and substance, teach us the art of consequence, the deep-rooted joy of shaping our destiny one forward-looking choice at a time.

Let's learn to recognize when a choice demands our deepest contemplation and when it merely asks for a whimsical toss of a coin. In practicing discernment, we find not just the path through the maze, but also the story of who we are and who we're becoming. It takes this sort of conscious decision-making to successfully pursue our dreams.

Persisting in Our Pursuit of Dreams

Our dreams are the whimsical, elusive butterflies of our mind's garden. Pursuing these dreams is like chasing these butterflies with a net made from strands of hope and determination. This pursuit can prove as absurd as it is beautiful, filled with pitfalls disguised as shortcuts and mirages that look like destinations. To see through the illusory choices that often befuddle us, we must become connoisseurs of our own desires, understanding deeply what it is we truly seek. We must peel back the layers of 'shoulds' and 'coulds' to reveal the 'musts' that propel us forward.

So, how do we persist consistently in our pursuit of our dream butterflies? Reality often wears the mask of illusion, so seeing through these disguises is like trying to read a book in a language you don't understand. That means in order for us to be productive in our persistence, we must peel away the layers of illusion, one by one, until the core of our true aspirations is revealed. We end up playing games of cosmic hide and seek, where what we're seeking might be hiding in plain sight, wearing the cloak of the mundane.

Persisting in our dreams requires a special kind of vision — not just with our eyes, but with our hearts. We must recognize that every illusory choice and dead end is actually a signpost, guiding us towards our true path.

Many days, we'll find ourselves walking through a hall of mirrors, where every reflection is a distorted version of our dreams. So, we must find that one mirror that reflects our truest desires.

Also, let's not forget the art of celebrating small victories in our dream pursuits. Every step forward, no matter how small, is a cause for celebration. Each little win is akin to finding a single piece of a jigsaw puzzle – while the picture is still incomplete, there's joy in finding that one piece that fits perfectly into the grand scheme of things. Every one percent closer we get to our goals deserves its own moment of applause.

Making informed choices is another key to our persistence. This involves gathering many puzzle pieces of information, no matter how scattered they seem, then putting them together to form a map of our journey. We must play the role of lead investigator in our own life stories, where each clue leads us closer to the treasures we dream about.

In the end, we also must arm ourselves with the understanding that the path to our dreams isn't paved with certainty. So, our greatest weapon against the onset of willful ignorance is the courage to face the unknown. But, our other great weapon is to learn when to seek guidance and be open to new and strange ideas.

Making One Percent Better Choices

Today, let's embark on a quest to become just one percent better by practicing the art of conscious decision making. How do we become a mere one percent better in this fine art? Your challenge is to **choose just one decision you've been avoiding.**

What is the most glaring item lurking in the shadows of your to-do list? We often dress seemingly mundane decisions in the camouflage of 'I'll think about it tomorrow'. Well, the sun has risen on 'tomorrow', so it's time to shine a light on that elusive decision.

Ask yourself, "Why have I been avoiding this decision?" Is it fear dressed as practicality, or more likely perhaps, laziness masquerading as patience? This reflection shouldn't be seen as a judgment against your self, but rather as a way to understand our motives -– like a detective playing the good cop, gently interrogating a witness.

Once you've forced yourself to make a choice on that decision, even if the choice is to simply forget about it and move on, reflect on it how you came to that decision. What lesson has it taught you to ponder your decision making process, even over seemingly simple things?

For extra credit, share this newfound wisdom with someone. It could be as simple as a conversation over coffee or a note to a friend. All you need to say, "You know, I've been putting off this decision and here's what I learned..." Then, challenge that friend to deal with a similar put-off decision.

While the goal of today's challenge is modest, there is a profound step you're choosing to take by accepting it. It sounds simple enough to grow just one percent wiser, kinder, and more aware of the absurdity of our non-choices. But, realizing where our decision trees can go wrong over the simplest decision can make us realize that many of the choices we make are not all that important after all. Too often, we ignore the bigger, more fundamental decisions that will actually allow us to lead more fruitful lives.

Also, the act of sharing what you've learned not only cements your own learning but might just be the lantern someone else needs in their own fog of indecision. Remember, the one percent rule is cumulative, and if we help others, that compounds our contribution to bettering our world.

Closing Thoughts

As you lay your head down tonight, reflect on the choices you made today. How did it feel to focus on the quality of your decisions rather than the quantity of options? Ponder on the idea that perhaps the path to personal freedom and joy isn't about having more choices but about making more meaningful ones. Remember, every little step counts towards a more joyous and connected existence.

As today's chapter in the Chronicles closes, remember, dear reader, that your dreams are the seeds of your future reality. Water them with persistence, nurture them with informed choices, and celebrate each sprout of progress. In the grand garden of life, your dreams await to bloom splendidly.

Next time on Chronicles of Absurdia... we dig into the definition of what it means to be open-minded, and how being too close-minded can lead to some absurd problems.

So, let's choose wisely and create a life that’s as absurdly beautiful as it can be. Keep reveling in the absurdity, for it is in the nonsensical that we often find the most profound truths. Until we meet again, may your day be filled with enlightening dialogues and delightful discoveries! Let’s laugh, learn, and leap into the unknown with the lightness of being that only true understanding can bring.

With wit and whimsy,

~ Amelia Desertsong, January 19, 2024

Why We Must Practice Open-Mindedness

Have you ever noticed how life has a peculiar way of tossing curveballs wrapped in wet newspaper? It's in these moments that our minds, often set in their ways like a stubborn mule in a mud pit, need a gentle, or sometimes not-so-gentle, nudge towards openness. This is because clinging to old ideas in the face of new absurdities is like trying to use a typewriter to send an email—quaint, but hopelessly out of touch with the current reality.

Let's take a moment to chuckle at the absurdity of rigid thinking. Picture a man who insists on using a map in the age of GPS, only to find himself in a field of bewildered cows instead of his cousin's wedding. (Yes, this really happens in 2024, especially in Vermont!) Or, let's consider a woman who refuses to believe that sushi is a culinary delight, staunchly equating it to glorified bait –- until one adventurous bite leads her to proclaim it the eighth wonder of the world.

These humorous tales aren't just for giggles, even if we do enjoy a good laugh. They serve as reminders that the world is a kaleidoscope of perspectives, ideas, and sushi rolls. When we pry open the windows of our minds even just a crack, we invite in the fresh air of possibilities, perspectives, and yes, a bit of the absurd.

The Art of Being Open-Minded

As we march on in a world brimming with information, sifting through the noise to separate nuggets of wisdom from the chaff is vital. When faced with the difficult choices of the many forked roads we come across, we often turn to the beliefs that our family and friends have imposed upon us. This often means that we rely solely on what may most likely be misconceptions and incomplete information to make decisions that lead to disastrous results.

This is why learning open-mindedness is so important; it helps illuminate the hidden paths and uncovers the signs we might otherwise miss. However, in our topsy-turvy world of Absurdia, practicing open-mindedness is like trying to juggle while riding a unicycle —it requires balance, a sense of humor, and a healthy dose of humility. We must keep our mental doors slightly ajar, even when every fiber of our being wants to slam them shut and throw away the key.

Open-mindedness isn't just a virtue; it's a survival skill. When faced with difficult choices, seeking opinions and sharing your thoughts is like assembling a round

table of wise sages in your mind. Each opinion is a torchlight, illuminating the path from different angles, revealing pitfalls and treasures alike.

We also must be open to admitting we're fallible and to always consider where we may have gone wrong. While ignorance is often something many people will use as a crutch, for we adventurers of Absurdia, we instead recognize it as the embarrassing cousin of knowledge. It can be hilarious as it is embarrassing to admit our ignorance.

Admitting we don't know something is like wearing a sign that says, "Yes, I am human." Rather than a low point, we should instead take these admissions as starting points for better future decisions, as a clean slate where possibilities can be drawn fresh.

Our admissions of ignorance are like opening the windows of a stuffy room, letting in fresh perspectives and ideas, dispersing the stale air of 'I know it all' so prevalent in today's credential-obsessed society. It can be as liberating as taking off tight shoes from our swollen feet after a long day.

But, what about when we still can't figure things out for ourselves? Well, seeking guidance is another art in itself. But, to ask for guidance, one must first embrace the humble pie of ignorance. It's human nature for us to

resist this notion, because who wants to be wrong? However, admitting "I don't know" isn't a white flag of defeat; it's a bugle call for the cavalry of wiser folks to come rushing in.

We must wholeheartedly acknowledge that the maze of life is too complex to wander alone, and that sometimes, another's map might just have the 'X' marking the spot we seek. This means we must never be afraid to ask for directions. We must be humble enough to acknowledge the best way to move forward is often by leaning on the wisdom of others. By stepping into others' shoes and seeing the world through their lenses, we can walk the next difficult mile of our lives with a more enlightened step.

We can also consult the maps left behind by those who've traversed similar paths. This can be through books they've written or other content they've produced or has been created about them. After listening to these whispers of experience, and with a bit of courage, we can make better choices by understanding what's worked before.

So, why must we practice open-mindedness and always seek guidance? That's because our individual knowledge is like a single star in a vast galaxy in universe of millions of at least two trillion other galaxies. While our singular unique minds can burn brightly in the

night, it takes the combined brilliance of many stars, both those of our ancestors and our contemporaries, to truly light up the night sky.

By embracing open-mindedness and seeking guidance, we're not just making better decisions; we accept that our own perspectives and insights are just a minuscule percentage in the grand scheme of the shared human experience. Opening ourselves up to the diverse and colorful complexities that tease us allows us to live more fulfilled lives that prove endlessly fascinating.

Seeking Guidance in the Most Unlikely Places

In becoming open-minded, not only do we expose ourselves to new sources of wisdom, we can also discover the unassuming sages among us.

Toddler Philosophers

We've all known that three-year-old with a penchant for asking "why?" When anyone tells him or her anything. I've found this childlike curiosity empowering on a number of occasions. For some reason, it seems that the power of questioning the status quo is taught out of us. Rather than constantly imagining new possibilities, we're insisted to take things for granted and just do whatever tasks we're given. We all need to recapture the spirit of toddler philosophers.

Canine Therapists

Animals have an uncanny ability to sense stress, but most especially dogs. If your pup is insisting on a walk, believe me, it's not to annoy you; they somehow instinctively know you need it, too. Just the walk alone might be enough of a chance to reframe your thoughts and come to a solution to a problem you're having. Who knows, you may even have a chance encounter with a neighbor or fellow dog walker that could lead to a new friendship? The simple demands of our pet partners often nudge us nudging us towards the answers we seek in the most unassuming ways. Perhaps some of the best guidance we can find comes on four legs!

Filling in the Blank with a Fortune Cookie Fiasco

Have you ever opened a fortune cookie only to find a blank piece of paper? Initially amusing, it's also monumentally disappointing; it's especially sad when you can't add, "in bed" to the end of the message. But, in moments like this, rather than give in to your upset, instead ponder what message you would've wanted to see. This leads to a moment of introspection about your goals and aspirations. The blank fortune can becomes a

serendipitous prompt for self-guidance, illustrating how wisdom can be found even in a cookie maker's blunder.

Chatty Cab Drivers

The next time you take a routine Uber ride, it can be quite enlightening to engage in conversation with the driver. From the elderly man with a treasure trove of stories to the young hustler working every waking minute to set herself up for financial independence, there's a lot to learn from these people as a captive audience. Tales of missed opportunities and subsequent life lessons can become a pivotal moment for us out of nowhere, sometimes helping us make major decisions more easily. Guidance can come from the most casual conversations, if we're are open to listen.

As you can gather from these four examples, wisdom sneaks up in the guise of everyday interactions and seemingly trivial events. From the curious minds of children, to the intuitive nudge of a pet, or the randomness of a blank fortune cookie, guidance and insight are often hiding in plain sight.

Embracing the Absurdity of the Unexpected

In our daily lives, we often find ourselves twirling with the unexpected. Let's reflect on how the strange, the

odd, the unpredictable, and the whimsical, can lead us to enriching experiences and newfound passions.

Unlikely Guides to New Passions

I remember vividly the day I met a rather eccentric individual on some friend-making website, who was deeply engrossed in a trading card game and was desperate for someone to play with online. Their intense focus on this game and quirky mannerisms piqued my curiosity. Venturing into their world felt like stepping into a parallel universe – one filled with strategy, fantasy, and camaraderie.

While I'd previously played both the Pokemon trading card game and Yu-Gi-Oh, this seemingly bizarre encounter reignited my love for trading card games. While that relationship didn't last much past a few months, it's a hobby that has since brought me countless hours of joy and connection to a community of like-minded enthusiasts. It's proof that the strangest random encounters can lead to the most cherished hobbies.

The Serendipitous Soundtrack of Life

Similarly, my musical tastes have been shaped by chance meetings with individuals whose playlists were as unconventional as their personalities. From obscure indie bands to experimental electronic music, each odd

interaction introduced me to sounds and rhythms I'd never have encountered in my usual circles.

These unexpected guides, with their offbeat taste in music, helped expand my auditory horizons and enriched my life with a diverse soundtrack. Even if I didn't end up adding many of these songs to my daily rotation, it still gave me a deeper appreciation for the great breadth of human endeavors in the realm of musical creativity.

Humor as a Life Raft in Life's Sea of Unpredictability

Navigating the strange waters of life as a career creative, humor is my greatest lifeline. Laughter has the power to transform awkward moments into memorable stories, and confusing situations into lessons in flexibility and resilience. You have to laugh at the absurdity of life for it to appear less daunting and more like an adventure.

Each bizarre encounter, every unexpected twist in my hobbies and interests, has been a stepping stone in my journey of personal growth. They've taught me to be more open-minded, more adaptable, and to find joy in the peculiar and the peculiarities in joy. Life isn't just a sequence of random events, even if it appears to be. There's actually a cavalcade of cause-and-effect relationships that are so immensely complex that even

the greatest social scientists and data analysts can only theorize why we so often encounter the unexpected.

So, the next time life presents you with something absurd or unexpected, I encourage you to embrace it. Dive into the unfamiliar, laugh in the face of confusion, and let the strange and odd guide you to new passions and perspectives. After all, it's often the unscripted, ad-libbed moments of our lives that leave the most lasting impressions.

Be One Percent More Open

Today, let’s embrace a challenge that nudges us just a bit further along the path of open-mindedness. We often find ourselves at crossroads, silently grappling with decisions or questions that seem to have no clear answers. So, here’s an invitation to step out of our internal echo chambers and seek fresh perspectives.

Identify a decision or a question you've been silently wrestling with. Reach out to someone you trust or admire, and open up about your dilemma. Seek their opinion, listen actively, and reflect on how this new perspective might shine light on your path. Remember, each conversation is a step towards a more informed and enlightened you.

For your convenience, here's a seven step process to help you succeed at this challenge:

1. **Identify Your Dilemma**: Begin by acknowledging a decision or question you've been wrestling with internally. It could be anything from a career move, a personal relationship issue, or even a small daily choice that's been weighing on your mind.

2. **Choose Your Confidant**: Select someone whose opinion you value – this could be a trusted friend, a family member, a mentor, or even a colleague you admire. The key here is to choose someone who might offer a viewpoint different from your own, someone who can challenge your thought process constructively.

3. **Initiate the Conversation**: Reach out to this person and express your desire to share something on your mind. Set the stage for an open and honest discussion. Remember, the goal is not to seek approval or validation, but to gain a different perspective.

4. **Share Your Dilemma**: Explain your situation or question as clearly as you can. Be open about your uncertainties and the aspects you are struggling with. This transparency will not only help the other person understand your predicament but also allow you to vocalize and organize your thoughts.

5. **Listen Actively**: As your confidant responds, practice active listening. This means fully concentrating, understanding, responding, and then remembering what is being said. Resist the urge to interrupt or defend your position. The goal is to absorb their perspective.

6. **Reflect on the New Perspective**: After the conversation, take some time to reflect. How does this new viewpoint align or differ from your original thoughts? What new insights did you gain? How might this advice help in making a more informed decision?

7. **Acknowledge the Growth**: Dimply engaging in this exercise is a step towards being more open-minded. Each conversation like this is a building block towards a more informed, enlightened, and flexible self.

Remember, open-mindedness is not about always changing your opinion, but about being willing to consider other viewpoints. It's about understanding that the world is vast, perspectives are diverse, and there is always something new to learn. As you take on this challenge, remind yourself that every conversation is an opportunity to grow – even just one percent. Here's to expanding our horizons, one open-minded conversation at a time!

Closing Thoughts

As we close today's chapter of absurdity, let's carry with us the lesson that open-mindedness is about listening, absorbing, and evolving. It's about making peace with not knowing and finding joy in the journey to understanding. It isn't just about opening our ears, but also our hearts and minds. We must embrace the "I don't know" moments with the enthusiasm of a child in a candy store. Sometimes, the journey to understanding is like a dance in the rain — unpredictable, a bit messy, but ultimately refreshing and joyful.

Today's absurd moments, those little quirks and quandaries that life presents, aren't just fleeting instances of confusion or hilarity. They are the celestial bodies in the galaxy of our growth, waiting to be charted as guiding stars for our tomorrows. Each perplexing situation, each comedic mishap, is a potential Polaris in the making, guiding us toward greater wisdom and understanding.

After all, just as Forrest Gump's mom always said, "Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're going to get,." Just like those chocolates, life's unpredictability is what makes it both exasperating and exquisite. Enjoy the sweet, sometimes salty, journey. Today's absurdities are just the universe's way of adding a little flavor to the mundane. Laugh at the confusion and

learn from the surprises in this unpredictable, beautiful rainstorm of life.

Tomorrow is another day likely to be filled with unexpected twists, turns, and maybe a cow or two in your path. It's all part of the grand adventure! After all, what's life without a little absurdity? Just a series of uneventful days, and who wants that?

With wit and whimsy,
~ Amelia Desertsong, January 20, 2024

Self-Awareness Breeds Critical Thinking

For over three decades, I wandered through an arid desert of uncertainty, surrounded by a frantic crowd, all seemingly lost yet pretending to know the way. Like a mad flock of starlings, people around me flailed in every direction, driven by unseen forces and unspoken fears. Amidst this chaos, I too often felt like a rudderless ship, adrift in the vast ocean of existence, whispering to myself the unsettling truth: "I don't know what the hell I'm doing."

However, at the age of thirty-five, a profound realization dawned upon me. This moment of epiphany was as sudden as it was unexpected. I discovered that it took nothing more than acknowledging my own uncertainties to begin cultivating a deeper understanding of myself and the world at large. Once a source of great unease, my uncertainty transformed into a pillar of enlightenment, guiding me through the shadows of ignorance.

As I ventured further into this newfound wisdom, I realized how rare true self-awareness is in our society. My daily encounters with minds propelled more by impulse than reason paint a stark picture of a world often lacking in critical thought. Observing the actions of those around me, guided as they seemed by invisible strings,

I've become acutely aware of the glaring absence of deliberate contemplation.

In this edition of Chronicles of Absurdia, we'll explore the journey from the chaos of unexamined life to the clarity of self-awareness. Let's delve into how embracing the absurdities and uncertainties of life can not only foster critical thinking but also illuminate the path to a deeper, more meaningful existence. By the end of today's essay, I hope that you will go from being lost in the frenetic shuffle of the collective to finding solace and strength in the quiet acknowledgment of your own unknowing.

The Path to Self-Awareness

Realizing our self-awareness often begins in the most unassuming landscape: the mundane, everyday encounters and decisions that shape our lives. My own journey is shaped through the chaos and cacophony of daily existence. While my life has been marked by the occasional grand epiphany in moments of tranquility, these realizations only came through navigating an often painful daily grind as a freelance creative.

Observing the world around me, I've seen an unfortunate pattern emerge with human behavior, a public sphere dominated by impulsiveness and a conspicuous absence of critical thought. I can't help but

notice how most individuals, including myself at times, seem to operate on autopilot, making decisions with little regard for their deeper implications. These actions, driven by an undercurrent of societal expectations and personal anxieties, often appeared as if orchestrated by some unseen puppeteer. Most people seem to dance to a tune they neither chose nor understand. It's struck me profoundly how, amid the crashing waves of life's unyielding realities, so few pause to contemplate the rudder by which they steer.

Each day, I watch a torrent of decisions made without pause or consideration. This cascading waterfall of reckless abandon fueled by such rash choices not only ruins the days of those that make them, but causes collateral damage to unsuspecting victims. All the mistakes I've watched my peers make is just a tiny part of the embodiment of human folly. Unfortunately, their mistakes have often left me, who refuses to give into the collective ignorance, to become washed up like driftwood on unfamiliar beaches.

Somehow, in the midst of these unscheduled walks on the rocky beaches of an existence on the fringe, I found unexpected comfort in my confession of uncertainty. It was a humbling revelation, as if while looking up to the vast cosmos above or out to the beckoning blue expanse of the ocean, I let either or both

swallow me whole. I learned valuable lessons in the consequences of unexamined living, a vivid illustration of how the lack of self-awareness could lead not only to personal dismay but also to collective turbulence.

Amidst the tumult of these experiences, I had remind myself of the limitations of human understanding, and made a promise to reexamine the choices I make and the paths I tread. In the face of the infinite, delusions of grandeur and infallibility wither away like autumn leaves. With this increased self-awareness, I now discovered the transformative power of my own uncertainty. I found an unexpected ally in my confession of uncertainty.

This acknowledgment did not come easily; it was a humbling admission, akin to standing naked before the vast expanse of the cosmos, dwarfed by its immense scale and mystery. But in this vulnerability, I found strength. It was as if admitting "I don't know" was the first step in truly seeing, a portal to a new dimension of understanding where the only certainty was the abundance of unknowns.

Soon, this liberating realization allowed me to break free from the tyranny of blind impulses. I could finally quit the frantic race that consumed so many around me. I began to seriously question the status quo, and to seek the truth often hidden beneath the murky

waters of our collective unconscious. I was able to detach, if only momentarily, from the frantic race to nowhere I began to view my daily encounters not as battles to be won but as puzzles to be understood, So, I ventured forth, armed with the knowledge that by admitting my lack of understanding, I'd already surpassed the horde of mindless drones that surrounded me.

So, my own path to self-awareness evolved from observing the external chaos to recognizing my internal tumult. By embracing my doubts and uncertainties, I learned to navigate through life with a renewed sense of purpose and understanding. This internal voyage was not about finding definitive answers, but about learning to live comfortably with the questions themselves. In accepting my own not knowing, I found the keys to unlocking a deeper, more critical engagement with the world, setting the stage for a journey not just toward self-awareness but toward a more thoughtful and examined life.

The Humble Acceptance of Uncertainty

To be truly self-aware is to recognize our own fallibility. We must embrace the ambiguity that shrouds our existence, and make a conscious effort to seize the human experience for all its faults. Every day, I continue to walk the tightrope of life, teetering between the

precipice of wisdom and the abyss of ignorance. I continue to embrace the power of my confession, which I often repeat to myself.

Embarking on a journey to greater self-awareness led me to a critical juncture where I found myself at the precipice of uncertainty. While it was a daunting place, as my freelance career came to an abrupt end, this endpoint offered a panoramic view of life's vast landscape of possibilities. At the heart of my uncertainty, I discovered an unexpected ally: the humble confession of "I don't know." This simple phrase became my sanctuary of introspection, a space where I could momentarily let go of the pretense of knowledge and embrace the raw truth of my ignorance.

Abandoning all pretense that my life was already written for me somehow was both liberating and grounding. This is why I often gaze up at the infinite expanse of the cosmos or out to the boundless horizons of the ocean, allowing myself to be swallowed whole by their majesty and mystery. Except, this time in my mid-thirties, with my life completely lacking direction, I actually let the infinity speak to me.

Humbly accepting uncertainty isn’t about reveling in indecision, though. You must mindfully acknowledge the limitations of human understanding. Our world often prioritizes appearance over authenticity, so admitting

one's doubts can feel like a revolutionary act. We must openly challenge the facade of infallibility that we're sometimes pressured to uphold. Still, in the face of life's infinite complexity, our societal delusions of grandeur and certainty wither away, much like autumn leaves that fall, making way for the new growth of spring.

This newfound perspective isn't a passive resignation to the chaos of existence; rather, it's a dynamic engagement with it. By acknowledging my own uncertainties, I was able to question the status quo more freely and explore the murky waters beneath the surface of societal norms. This led to a deeper understanding of both myself and our universe, as I began to see through the murky illusions that often cloud collective judgment.

Accepting my uncertainty also meant acknowledging that the apparent security of conventional wisdom is often a mirage. I'm encouraged to step off the well-trodden path every day and venture into the unknown, armed with the powerful knowledge that the human capacity to learn and grow is limitless. This mindset shift allows me to break free from the shackles of blind conformity and impulse-driven decisions. I still give in to impulse every so often, but whenever those actions lead to unfortunate results, I make it a point to learn from them.

In this realm of the absurd we call life, where the only certainty is uncertainty itself, I've found a paradoxical sense of clarity. The recognition of my own fallibility opens the door to a more authentic engagement with life. It's clear to me now that the willingness to admit "I don't know" is not a sign of weakness, but a testament to the strength of one's character. It's the first step toward developing the critical thinking necessary to navigate the complexities of our existence.

Learning to value questioning and exploration over reaching a specific destination of supposed certainty hasn't only enriched my understanding of the world, but also fostered a more compassionate and empathetic view of others. After all, we all share in this universal dance of doubt and discovery. Here in Absurdia, embracing the unknown isn't a surrender, but a bold act of defiance against the pretense of false knowledge, and a declaration of our commitment to continual growth and learning.

Practical Advice on Cultivating Self-Awareness and Critical Thinking

Begin by accepting that you don't have all the answers. Embrace your mistakes and uncertainties as opportunities for learning and growth. This humility becomes the foundation of self-awareness and critical

thinking, allowing you to question assumptions and open your mind to new possibilities.

Take time each day to reflect on your thoughts, feelings, and actions. Ask yourself why you made certain decisions and what influences might be shaping your behavior. Are your actions aligned with your true desires, or are they reactions to external pressures? This daily practice helps to cultivate a mindful approach to life, encouraging deliberate choices over impulsive reactions.

Don't accept things at face value. Cultivate a healthy skepticism and question the norms and beliefs that you encounter. Ask yourself, "Is this the best way of doing things? Is there evidence to support these beliefs, or are they merely conventions?" This approach sharpens your critical thinking skills and also increases the chance for innovation and unbound creativity.

Seek out and expose yourself to different viewpoints and experiences. This way you can broaden your understanding and help you see the world through various lenses, reducing the risk of cognitive biases. Engaging with people who challenge your worldview can strengthen your ability to analyze and evaluate different arguments critically.

Also, don't shy away from engaging in constructive debates. Participate in discussions and debates where

you can defend your ideas, challenge others, and consider alternative viewpoints. This can be a powerful way to refine your thinking, test your assumptions, and develop stronger arguments. But, if the arena gets hostile and toxic, know when you're best served to just walk away.

Most importantly, set aside time for thinking. In our fast-paced world, it's crucial to carve out periods for uninterrupted thought. Dedicate time to ponder life's big questions, contemplate your goals and values, and strategize about your future. This deliberate thinking time can lead to greater self-awareness and more strategic life planning.

By integrating these practices into your daily life, you can enhance your self-awareness and cultivate a more refined and disciplined approach to critical thinking. These practices will likely enrich your personal and professional life almost immediately, while also contributing to a more thoughtful and considered world.

Expanding Your Horizons

The actionable advice in today's chapter doesn't just stop at building self-awareness, but also will help you to breed critical thinking through these actions. Embarking on the path to self-awareness and critical thinking isn't just about introspection and questioning;

it's also about expanding your horizons, both literally and metaphorically.

To truly embrace the lessons of absurdity and navigate the complexities of life with wisdom, one must dare to venture beyond the familiar and comfortable. Here's how you can broaden your perspective and deepen your understanding of the world.

Explore New Cultures and Ideas: Venture into unknown territories, both geographically and intellectually. If possible, travel to places that challenge your cultural assumptions and expose you to different ways of life. When physical travel isn't an option, explore diverse cultures through literature, films, and art. Engage with ideas and philosophies that contrast with your own to enhance your understanding and appreciation of the world's multifaceted nature.

Commit to Lifelong Learning: Read widely, explore new disciplines, and engage with complex ideas. The more knowledge you acquire, the better equipped you will be to assess information critically and make informed decisions. Take courses in subjects you know little about, attend workshops and lectures, or learn a new skill or language. Your pursuit of knowledge should be endless, as every new piece of information adds another layer of depth to your understanding of the universe.

Develop Emotional Intelligence: I've found that a commitment to continuous learning is a boon for gaining greater emotional intelligence. Understanding and managing your emotions can greatly enhance your decision-making and critical thinking skills. By recognizing your emotional triggers and learning to control your reactions, you can approach situations more objectively and make more reasoned decisions.

Cultivate Creative Thinking: Step outside your intellectual comfort zone by engaging in creative activities that stimulate your brain in new ways. Whether it's painting, writing, music, or any other form of artistic expression, creativity fosters innovative thinking and can help you see problems and solutions from unique perspectives.

Build Diverse Relationships: Surround yourself with people from different backgrounds, beliefs, and life experiences. These relationships can challenge your preconceptions and provide insights that you would not have encountered in your usual social circle. Engaging in open, respectful conversations with those who hold different viewpoints can significantly broaden your perspective.

Take Risks and Embrace Failure: Stepping into the unknown often involves risk, and with risk comes the possibility of failure. However, every failure is a lesson in

disguise, offering invaluable insights that you can use to grow and improve. By taking calculated risks and learning from the outcomes, you're more likely to discover new paths and possibilities.

Reflect on Your Experiences: Regular reflection on your experiences, especially those that push you out of your comfort zone, can provide profound insights into your character, beliefs, and the nature of the world. Reflect on what you've learned, how you've grown, and how these experiences have reshaped your understanding of life.

Stay Open to Change: Always keep in mind that the only constant in life is change. Staying open and adaptable to the ever-evolving nature of existence allows you to navigate life's uncertainties with more ease and confidence. Embrace change as an opportunity to grow and learn, rather than a force to fear and resist.

Question and Re-evaluate Your Views Regularly: As you expand your horizons, continually question and re-evaluate your beliefs and knowledge. What you once held as an absolute truth may change with new experiences and insights. Having a mindful process of constant questioning and reassessment is vital for deep, meaningful growth and understanding.

Expanding our horizons is an integral part of the journey toward self-awareness and critical thinking. It involves a continuous, dynamic process of learning, questioning, and exploring the vastness of human experience. By stepping beyond the familiar and embracing the vast, often unpredictable world of possibilities, you not only enhance your personal growth, but also contribute to the collective wisdom of humanity.

Closing Thoughts

Dear readers, I hope you've enjoyed our journey through the shadows of uncertainty and the illumination of introspection. But, this mission we've embarked upon isn't a finite trek. Traversing the intricate landscape of self-awareness and critical thinking is an ongoing odyssey, in which each step unveils deeper layers of understanding and connection with our wacky world and those who wander alongside us in it.

Embracing the absurdities of life, with all its unpredictable twists and turns, challenges us to continually question, reflect, and grow. Our voyage through the realms of not knowing and critical inquiry isn't merely an intellectual exercise. It's a profound engagement with the essence of being human, compelling us to confront the complexities of existence with courage, curiosity, and a sense of humor.

Today, I invite you to join me in this ongoing introspective quest. Embrace your doubts and uncertainties as catalysts for your own growth. Challenge yourself to step back and observe the whirlwind of life with a curious mind. Ask questions, seek understanding, and allow your natural inquisitiveness to lead you.

Take a moment to consider the choices you make. Are they driven by genuine desire, or are they echoes of others' expectations? Dare to pause in the rush of daily life. Reflect on your actions and decisions. Then, endeavor to infuse them with thoughtful intention. This deliberate pause will not only enhance your self-awareness, but also pave the way for more mindful living and better critical thinking.

Tomorrow, I encourage you to take a step further. Embrace the power of your self-awareness to question the norms you've taken for granted thus far. Delve ever deeper into the realms of critical thinking. Learn to ask better questions. The quality of your answers will depend on just how specific you frame your intentions. Don't just ask what you want or what your goals are, but ask instead, what will excite you and bring you satisfaction each day?

Finally, use your newfound perspective to explore new paths and possibilities, to venture beyond the familiar. Let this journey of introspection be a continuous

process, one that enriches your understanding and empowers you to navigate our complex lives with wisdom and grace.

But, before any of this is possible, It takes a willingness to acknowledge our limitations, then indulge our eagerness to learn from them to truly set ourselves apart. Move forward with an open heart and a keen mind, always ready to embrace any lessons that life has to offer. Remember, accepting that you don't know what you want, but instead asking what will engage and inspire you, is the very moment that you can set yourself apart from the maddening crowd.

~ Amelia Desertsong

Was Benjamin Franklin the Founding Father of Self-Help?

In the pages of “Chronicles of Absurdia,” I prefer to take a rather lighthearted approach to self-help, laughing at the absurdity we encounter on a daily basis. Generally, self-help is a much maligned genre. Yet, because of the promise it offers, it’s still quite a popular topic. Yet, probably no book achieves the goals of any self-help book than one that was printed back in the late 1700’s!

For today’s whimsical wandering through the corridors of history, we’re dusting off the pages of Benjamin Franklin’s Autobiography. Yes, amid his tales of flying kites in thunderstorms and crafting bifocals, old Ben was also penning what might just be the first American self-help book.

Franklin’s life story isn’t just a recollection of a well-lived life. Rather, it’s better seen as a treasure trove of “How to Be a Better You,” but 18th-century style. Who would've thought that one of the most famous American founding fathers had a thing or two to say about self-improvement?

Well, dear readers, as we peer back in time, uncovering the humor and wisdom of a man who was more than just a face on currency. Franklin is perhaps the inadvertent godfather of the self-help genre. Let's find

out what Ben can teach us about embracing life's absurdities with a wink and a nod.

Franklin's Unintentional Self-Help Guide

Benjamin Franklin is one of the most pivotal figures in American history. He's considered one of America's "founding fathers," as he made numerous contributions to early American society. By the 21st century, he's most famous for being on the American one-hundred dollar bill. Still, many folks even in this century continue to portray Franklin's life as a practical personification of the "American Dream." Emphasizing hard work, intellectual stimulation, and frugality, Franklin's life story can be seen as a blueprint for personal success, no matter what nation you may find yourself living in.

What's famously known as the first major American autobiography was modestly originally titled simply as Memoirs. The title of "Autobiography" seems to have been bestowed on it after his death. In any case, Franklin's "Autobiography" seems to be among the first in the world to have been titled with the proper term, whether it would've been his intention or not.

Certainly, the actual genre existed long before Franklin's book, but it wasn't known as such. The word "autobiography" was first officially used in English by British poet and "writer of miscellaneous prose" Robert Southey in 1809. But, more importantly, Franklin's Autobiography isn't just a first in the autobio genre as it exists today, but it's also one of the first books that we would categorize today as a "self-help manual."

While it wasn't Franklin's intention to write a self-help book, he's very descriptive of the way he tried his best to live. He likely hoped the readers of his Memoirs / Autobiography would try to emulate him in at least some ways. We're fortunate that Franklin wasn't just content with being a founding father of the United State, famed inventor, and the guy on the $100 bill. Unintentionally, he added 'life coach through memoir' into his already crowded resume. Ben gives us more than just a walkthrough of his life; he serves up a full-blown blueprint for success. It's like he's saying, "Follow these steps, and you too can be on currency one day!"

The beauty of Franklin's unintentional self-help guide is its simplicity. There's no complicated jargon or no ten-step programs, just good old-fashioned common sense. It's a bit like your own grandfather's advice, but with better, nation-building anecdotes. His life story becomes a masterclass in personal development, and he

does it with the flair of someone who's not just been there and done that, but also put it on a kite and flown it in a thunderstorm.

In his book, he shows how keeping productively busy, constantly challenging your intellect, and being frugal can help you to become very successful. This simple, yet still quite relevant advice should still be considered wisdom towards living a successful life. But perhaps the greatest advice I've gleaned from his memoir are two things that have become cornerstones of my own life: reflection and self-education.

Harnessing the Power of Reflection and Self-Education

To put it simply, in the school of life, Benjamin Franklin was the kid who skipped class and still ended up valedictorian. Ben championed the art of reflection and self-education with the zeal of a monk on a quest for enlightenment. He's the guy who'd instead of Googling everything and taking the first few results for their word, will actually go to the library and dig deeper. It might sound quaint, but it's what needs to be done to gain real insight and knowledge.

Franklin preaches in his book that constantly expanding your knowledge, being well-informed, staying involved with public matters, and doing your best to help out the community are among the best ways to make your time well-spent and to feel yourself useful. Franklin did all of these things by example himself; his way of living brought him great fame, status, and most importantly prestige. Still, his "self-help" book isn't so much of an instruction manual, rather than it sets an example to be followed.

As do many biographies, Franklin starts with his family background and the setting into which he was born. Ben's father, Isaiah, was a dyer by trade, but expanded into the business of candle making upon moving to New England. Apparently, Isaiah had quite a positive influence on him. His father, though not overly rich by any means, was a very well-respected working-class man in Boston, Massachusetts. Many local leaders came to him for his advice in both private and public matters. His father was even asked to be an arbitrator to settle some disputes.

Franklin speaks highly of nights around the dinner table when he was younger. His father would always try starting some edifying conversation. Ben would get so interested in the conversations that he'd often forget what he was eating. This forgetfulness of what he was

eating he says would help him later on in life, because his tastes weren't as well "instructed" as they were for most other people. Dinner became for him more of an educational time than a dining time. His childhood prepared him well for later in life, as his father was very concerned about his children's intellectual growth.

Despite Isaiah Franklin's concern for his children's intellectual well-being, it may surprise you that Ben didn't have much formal education. He had only one year at grammar school, and did well, and one year at a school for writing and math. Writing-wise, he learned a little to "scribble," as he put it. With mathematics, though, he struggled mightily.

Still, let's not forget, this is the man who turned self-education into a kind of extreme sport. Starting from a humble background, where formal education was scarce, Ben became a self-taught intellectual heavyweight. He devoured books like they were going out of style and turned every life experience into a learning opportunity – or as we call it today, "adding to the resume."

Ben became primarily self-educated through the many books he read. He had an incredible fondness for books from an early age. Whenever Ben had any spare change, he would only buy books. Somehow, reading came naturally to him. This love for reading would only

intensify over the years. He seemed to learn best through books. And, though he struggled mightily with math in his limited schooling, he later taught himself mathematics through a book and mastered it. This thirst for knowledge would continue throughout his life.

While he does not directly say so, he clearly suggests that his readers to follow his example of self-education. It is important that people inform themselves about everything that they possibly can, so that folks can make better informed decisions. Especially in today's so-called "information" age, this is a particularly good act to follow. He also makes a point to always reflect on what we've learned and pass this wisdom on to others.

Ben Franklin's life is a testament to the power within us to rise above our circumstances. Franklin shows us that with a curious mind and a reflective soul, even a candle-maker's son can light up the world. He's the poster child for the notion that if life gives you lemons, you read up on citrus horticulture, invent a new kind of lemonade, and write about it in your memoirs. His journey from a humble background to becoming a self-taught intellectual highlights the potential within all of us. After all, in the grand narrative of life, we're all self-taught students, and sometimes the best teacher is the person staring back at us in the mirror.

Living a Balanced Life

In the first pages of his Autobiography, Franklin writes that he's quite content with the life he's lived. However, he reveals how he would love to have the chance to go back and fix a few things, just as anyone would. Franklin writes,

"I should have no objection to a repetition of the same life from its beginning, only asking the advantages authors have in a second edition to correct some faults of the first. So I might, besides correcting the faults, change some sinister accident and events of it for others more favorable."

Of course, since such repetitions are impossible, Franklin believes what is most similar to living life over again is to make a recollection of your own life, then putting it into writing so that it may be reflected upon by others.

Franklin's principles of moderation and avoiding excess were not just guidelines but the secret sauce to his well-seasoned life. Franklin knew all too well that indulging in too much of anything, be it work, play, or his beloved books, could tip the scales from 'remarkably well-rounded' to 'hey, maybe dial it back a bit, Ben.' Franklin's principles of moderation and avoiding excess showcase the importance of balance in our daily lives.

Ben understood the importance of not overloading your plate at the buffet. Sure, he'd take a hearty scoop of public service and a generous helping of intellectual pursuits, but always left room for dessert. After all, what's life without a little sweetness? Here's a man who could, quite literally, write the book on work-life balance, then go and invent a stove or a bifocal lens just for the fun of it.

Today, we would consider Ben Franklin a "hardcore" entrepreneur. Not only was he industrious and frugal, but he also avoided "all appearances to the contrary." He never took part in what he considered as "idle diversions." Books were about the only things that took him away from his work. Franklin essentially lived as you saw him, a man married to his work; he would later get married for real, but still he was living to work. He put on no facades; Franklin worked hard and reflected that image daily.

Franklin lived by the Protestant work ethic. He worked his tail off, remained very frugal, and found that slowly things became progressively easier. Even after his printing business paid off all of its debts and he was able to retire comfortably, he continued working hard by devoting himself to public works.

Ben Franklin is the embodiment of working as hard as you can when you're younger to be able to reap the

fruits and benefits later on in life. Thanks to an early retirement, Franklin was able to do all the useful things that work earlier on in life prevented him from doing. Ben offers living proof to us that you can have your cake, eat it too, and still have enough left to share.

Embracing Flaws and Humility

In a stroke of self-aware genius, Ben Franklin wrote his autobiographic memoirs as what we may refer to today as a humblebrag playbook. He acknowledges his vanity like a cat who knows it's knocked over a vase, yet just sits there, smirking ever so slightly. It's Franklin's way of saying, "Sure, I might be a little full of myself, but when you've invented the lightning rod, you've earned a bit of swagger."

Franklin doesn't pretend to hide his own vanity; he gives you the story straight as he feels it. Being who he was both at the time and in retrospect, some such arrogance can be permitted. Vanity, Franklin explains, can be a good thing to have. While some people may be taken aback by how great a man Franklin professes himself to be, it's true that his example is a good one to follow considering how successful he became.

He did practice humility in some key ways, however. Franklin was particularly good at the art of constructive criticism. He used phrases such as "it

appears this is wrong," rather than saying "you're wrong." He didn't wish people to always try and prove others wrong. After all, when you find yourself in the wrong, you often end up feeling mortified. Franklin avoided this by being somewhat less assertive, leaving his mind just a little more open than most. After all, feeling mortified after being proved wrong is not particularly conducive to learning. Having your mind just a little more open will make learning much easier to absorb and enjoy.

Ben was also adamant about steering clear of personal abuse and libel. Franklin found personal attacks to be beneath him, and rightfully so. Fewer people will be as willing to hear the arguments of those who resort to personal attacks against people and their reputations. Sadly, we still have much of this still in our own society today, and it's only grown worse through social media. If more people continued to follow Franklin's example, we'd live in a much more thoughtful and tolerant society.

Franklin felt that "truth, sincerity, and integrity" are the key words to keep in mind in dealings with people. Those ideals are still with us today, of course, and it's shameful that more people don't hold them dear. His thirteen Virtues: temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation,

cleanliness, tranquility, chastity, and humility are all good ones to live by.

The most important thing to remember about Ben Franklin is that no matter how successful a person is, he or she must not let their vanity carry them away. As a younger man, Franklin was a man striving toward perfection. However, as perfectly as he tried to live, when he examined his days, he found more faults than he would have liked. Realistically, he then understood that perfection is not something that can be humanly attained, but can always be worked towards to make you a better person.

Franklin also came to realize “that a benevolent man should allow a few faults in himself, to keep his friends in countenance.” Reasonably, it’s no use to obsess over trying to be perfect. No matter how perfect you try to be, you will always have flaws; they’re just a part of being human.

Independence and Self-Publishing

In the temple of the American Dream, Ben Franklin stands as the patron saint of "doing it yourself." He was the original indie before indie was cool, a self-publishing maverick in an era when printing presses were still the iPads of their day. I can't help but marvel at the sheer audacity of his independence. He didn't just think outside

the box. In fact, he folded the box into a paper plane and let it soar.

So, it would end up being a blessing when his father decided to take Ben out of school, perhaps because of his failing in math. At first, Isaiah brought Ben home to work in his own candle making trade. But, Ben found no real interest in that field, however. Eventually, his father turned him over to Ben's older brother as a print shop apprentice. This would work out well for Ben, especially with his love of books. In fact, printing would become Ben's career.

Not only was Ben a voracious reader, but Franklin developed into a pretty good writer at a young age. This is unsurprising, as constant reading invariably improves writing skill. At the beginning, Ben expected his older brother to reject anything he would write for the newspaper. So, he disguised his writing under an assumed name. For some time, his brother and partners didn't realize who was slipping these pieces of paper with such interesting writing under the door. They just liked them enough to print them.

Ben did write a particularly controversial piece in these early years. It even brought his brother's entire print shop business into question. Although Ben was called up as a witness to the origins of this work, as he was an apprentice in the shop, no one suspected him of

writing the piece. No one was found responsible at the time.

This debacle proved that Franklin was not afraid to voice his opinions at all and was able to voice them quite effectively. Later, Franklin would open up about this piece, well after the fact, and he would write many articles for that newspaper under his own name. Ben's well-informed mind and above-average writing skills no doubt made his work quite edifying and enjoyable to read.

Eventually, Franklin would open up his own print shop, producing many of his most famous works with his own press. One of his greatest printing contributions was the famous Poor Richard's Almanac, which Franklin published from 1732 to 1757. It was not like most almanacs of his time. A passage from my freshman history college textbook Out of Many, A History of the American People sums it up well by saying,

"What was so innovative about Franklin's almanac, and what made it so important, was the manner in which the author used this traditional literary form to promote the new Enlightenment emphasis on useful and practical knowledge."

Franklin was happy to share his thoughtfulness with everyone. Through his works, he became the prototypical American intellectual, a title he holds even

today. Franklin was the founder of Junto, “a club of mutual improvement,” which was, in other words, an intellectual self-help club.

With Junto, the club members were required to come into each meeting with some theme to discuss that evening. Members were also required to write an essay every three weeks on any topic they chose. Junto served as an excellent discussion forum, and quickly grew in membership over just a few years under Franklin’s guidance.

I like to picture Ben, the rogue publisher, in his colonial garb with a smirk playing on his lips as he sets the type for his latest brainchild. There's something almost punk rock about it. He didn't wait for a nod of approval from the gatekeepers of his day. Instead, he grabbed the reins of his literary destiny, much like one would grab a particularly frisky cat: with determination and a slight underestimation of the impending frenzy.

Fast forward to the digital age, and we find that Franklin's spirit of independence is more relevant than ever. With the advent of the internet, blogs, and social media, the world of publishing has transformed into a wild west of opportunities. Anyone with a keyboard and an idea can strut onto the digital stage and shout, "Here's my masterpiece, world!”

Reflecting on this, one can't help but feel a kinship with Franklin. The self-publishing path is a thrilling roller coaster – part exhilarating freedom, part terrifying free-fall. In today's world, where algorithms often dictate what we see and read, the act of self-publishing becomes a defiant cry for creative freedom. It's how we say, "I'm here, I have something to say, and I don't need a traditional publisher to validate my existence." We have the technology for any of us to create the literary equivalent of our own soapboxes, standing on them, and starting conversations with whomever is willing to listen.

So, inspired by Franklin, I've embraced the beautifully messy, gloriously unpredictable world of independent creation. Together, my dear readers and fellow scribblers, we acknowledge the power of self-publishing in giving a voice to the unheard and bringing diverse stories to the forefront. Like Franklin, we recognize that while not every self-published work is a gem, the act of creating and sharing in itself is a victory.

Remember, sometimes the most extraordinary things come from simply having the courage to say, "I'll do it myself." Who knows? Maybe a few of us will end up on our own proverbial hundred-dollar bills one day.

Reflecting on Franklin's Further Accomplishments

Throughout the course of his Memoirs, Franklin shows how he became the clear-minded, methodical, industrious and frugal person as he is famously known. Frugality was extremely important to him, which allowed him to pay off his debts by his forties, something unheard of in his profession with the costs of equipment.

What's most interesting to me is that the printing business, at the time, wasn't considered to be a lucrative business. Many print houses which came before him would fail; over the years his competition diminished to the point that he was eventually the premier printer, if not the only competent one, in the city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

In 1743, Franklin founded the American Philosophical Society, which is still active today, and has included poignant members such as Thomas Jefferson. Through these forums, Franklin made many of his numerous intellectual contributions to American society. He came up with the idea of a public library, which flourished, of course. He also acted as the United States' first postmaster, the same U.S. Postal Service in America existing today.

Later in life, he would conceive of the institution of firefighters, to prevent the spread of fires that could be stopped. It didn't take long for fire departments to become a worldwide public service. He also, of course, invented the Franklin stove.

Also, while not necessarily an intellectual contribution, Franklin was among the first to lay out a detailed daily agenda, with time sectioned out for work, dining, sleep, and time set aside later in the evening for the examination of the day. This concept of methodic examination, in various permutations, is still used today. Franklin found moderation extremely important, as excess of one thing or another can be detrimental to other aspects of life.

Also, if that wasn't enough, Franklin contributed to the founding documents of America. Ben was part of the Committee of Five that would create the American Declaration of Independence in 1776. He primarily served as the document's editor and became one of its signors. He also signed the Treaty of Alliance with France, the Treaty of Paris that ended the revolutionary war, and of course the US Constitution. Funny enough, Ben was among the delegates who had reservations about the potential success of the constitution, but still did sign it with the hopes that it would successfully unite the

colonies. Franklin also served as ambassador to France. What a life!

Be Like Ben

Today I challenge you to try incorporating one of Franklin's virtues into your daily life. Whether it's being more frugal, learning something new, or reflecting on your day, make a small step towards personal improvement. This challenge is sort of like deciding to be a part-time superhero, but instead of a cape, you get bifocals and a kite.

First up, frugality. Now, this doesn't mean you need to start hoarding your pennies like a squirrel preparing for a very economical winter. Rather, be conscious about making smart choices with each purchase you make, or end up not making. Maybe skip that fifth latte of the week and brew a cuppa at home. As Franklin would say, "A penny saved is a penny earned." Or, in today's terms, "A latte skipped is a tiny step closer to not being broke."

Next, we have the noble pursuit of learning something new. In the spirit of Franklin, you don't need to invent a new stove. It can be as simple as learning a new word, or perhaps, tackle a DIY project. Remember, YouTube is your friend, the way the library was Franklin's. Just try not to electrocute yourself – that's a Franklin move we're not trying to replicate.

Lastly, there's practicing the art of reflection. This doesn't mean staring wistfully into a pond — though feel free if that's your thing. Take a moment at the end of the day to ponder your choices, your actions, and just maybe, how you can be a little more like Franklin tomorrow. Did you seize the day, or did the day seize you? Did you make your bed, metaphorically or literally? It's like a daily performance review, but with less anxiety and more introspection.

So, being like Ben is about making small, deliberate choices that, much like Franklin's kite in a thunderstorm, could lead to some pretty electrifying results. Go forth, be frugal, be curious, and be reflective. Channel your inner Franklin, and who knows? You might just end up inventing your own version of the lightning rod. At the very least, you could have a slightly more interesting day.

Closing Thoughts

Embracing our individual journey towards improvement, much like Franklin did, can lead to a fulfilling and meaningful life. We're all actors in the grand, often nonsensical play of life, where the script is unwritten and the plot twists are as unpredictable as a cat's mood swings.

Like Franklin, who probably never expected his face to end up on currency or to be the poster boy for self-

help centuries later, we navigate this oddball world, trying to carve a path that's uniquely ours. Perfection is the elusive unicorn; it's magnificent to imagine but impossible to catch. Franklin clearly understood that the beauty of life isn't in attaining some mythical state of flawlessness, but in the messy, glorious journey towards being a slightly better version of ourselves.

If I learned anything from Ben Franklin's example, it's that I should always strive to be independent, and most importantly, take charge of my own writing work. This is why I've never sought a traditional publishing house for my work; I've refused to let the machinations of Corporations affect what I write and how I go about my business. I will always self-publish, even if it means leaving potential money on the table. I never wrote for the money, anyway, and I still managed to get by.

After all, today we have the technology to serve as our own personal printing presses. If you have a smartphone, tablet, laptop, or desktop computer, you can publish your work. While I don't begrudge those who pursue a major (or even minor) publishing deal from a third party, it seems entirely unnecessary to me. Your words should be able to speak for themselves.

In my life experience, I've seen many talented writers spend the majority of their lives being rejected by press after press, when they should be instead putting all

their energy into their work. That's what I have done and this website is proof that even when the going got rough, I always came back to my writing because I made it my life's goal to publish all that I am able.

At this stage in my life, in my mid-thirties as I'm producing this newsletter, I'm at the point where I can follow Ben Franklin's example and do the things having to work for a living prevented me from doing before. Now I'm free to write whatever I desire, to write essays regularly on any topics I wish. All that I'm currently lacking is a society of like-minded scribblers and intellectuals to conspire with in perpetuating virtuous intellectualism.

Ben Franklin was no doubt an extraordinary human being, but he was still just a man. Franklin's life story is a living example that shows us that through hard work, intellectual challenge, frugality, and, most importantly, humility, we can all be extraordinary human beings. Yes, we can all follow Ben Franklin's example if we want to. Without fully realizing it, I found myself on that path right now.

As we reflect, let's remember that in this theater of the absurd, every small step and little victory in the name of self-improvement is a scene worth applauding. After all, if life is a play, why not make it a comedy? In this delightful comedy of errors and trials, let's keep

striving, just like good ol' Ben Franklin, with a twinkle in our eyes and an unquenchable thirst for becoming just a bit better, one absurd day at a time.

~ Amelia Desertsong, January 2024

Colophon

This newsletter is based on a paper I wrote for a freshman history college course, which transformed into an essay in recent years. In case you're curious, here are the original sources I used for that essay, which were my college textbooks:

- Marian J. Morton and Russell Duncan, First Person Past: American Autobiographies, 2nd ed. (Brandywine Press, 2004), p.39-62.
- John Mack Faragher, Mari Jo Buhle, Daniel Czitrom, and Susan H. Armitage, Out of Many, A History of the American People, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2004), p.87.
- The American Philosophical Society. https://www.amphilsoc.org
- "The Four Definitive Documents Signed by Benjamin Franklin." https://www.benjaminfranklin.net/four-definitive-documents.jsp

Never Stop Learning: The Pursuit of Knowledge Must Continue

Today, we embark on a whimsical journey through the labyrinth of lifelong learning, where the only constant is the perpetual promise of the unknown. The pursuit of knowledge is a quest as boundless as the universe itself. But, it offers a comical paradox: the more we know, the more we realize how little we understand. So, today's saga is not just for the scholarly or the erudite but for anyone who marvels at the endless expanse of learning landscapes, from the vast digital plains to the uncharted territories of our own curiosity.

No matter how advanced our species becomes, there will always be something more to learn, discover, and improve upon. You don't have to be an entrepreneur or business leader to stay on top of new developments within your field. The pursuit of knowledge must continue if you want to grow as a human being. But, you don't need to go back to school or get an MBA to do just that. There are plenty of ways to learn about what matters to you without spending any money at all!

After all, we live in an era where the sum of human knowledge is but a click away, a reality as absurd as it is magnificent. The idea that we could learn quantum

physics in pajamas or explore ancient civilizations while sipping coffee in a local café is a testament to our times' delightful peculiarity. So, in today's Chronicle, we uncover the humor and wit in our relentless quest to know more, to be more. Let's celebrate the curious spirits among us, a toast to those who never cease to ask, "What's next?" Join us as we explore how to recognize, appreciate, and laugh at the delightful absurdity of never-ending learning.

The Digital Learning Paradox

In the midst of this digital age, digital age, with its limitless potential for learning, we're presented with a ludicrous yet enlightening conundrum: how to navigate a vast sea of information without drowning in it. The paradox isn't just in the abundance of resources, but in the comedic challenge of sifting through the digital haystack to find the needles of wisdom that truly enrich our minds and souls.

Anytime and anywhere with a WiFi connection, we can instantly find ourselves seated before an endless buffet of knowledge, each morsel more tantalizing than the last. But, then there is a paradox of choice: with the world's wisdom a mere click away, deciding what to devour first can be a comical dilemma. We're like children in a candy store, eyes wide, mouths agape, overwhelmed

by the sugary possibilities. This digital cornucopia, while liberating, casts us into the throes of decision paralysis, where the fear of picking the wrong treat leads to a standstill.

Such irony: we possess the unprecedented power to learn any skill or subject at whim, yet we often find ourselves aimlessly scrolling, binge-watching cat videos, or falling down the rabbit hole of social media. It's as if we are at the biggest intellectual banquet in history, yet we can't decide between the appetizers. The digital learning paradox is this comedy of riches, where the wealth of information often leads not to enlightenment, but to an entertaining state of bewilderment.

Essentially, this ease of access to information creates an absurd scenario where we can simultaneously know everything and nothing at all. We flit from article to article, video to video, absorbing snippets of information, yet struggling to piece together a coherent understanding of the very knowledge we sought. In this realm, the quest for learning morphs into a humorous journey of clicking links, opening tabs, and never quite finishing anything we find within them.

The Crossroads of Intellectual Exploration

This abundance of knowledge gathering paths leads us to encounter the crossroads of intellectual

explorations. Each road is lined with the promise of new knowledge and discovery, so we're often left with an amazing quandary: which path to choose in a forest of infinite trails? This choice becomes an absurd comedy: even as we stand there with map in hand, we can't help but be bewildered by the plethora of options, each as enticing as the next.

The fear of missing out on any one branch of knowledge often leads to a hilarious choice paralysis. Scholars, hobbyists, and casual learners alike often find themselves each frozen before this vast expanse of intellectual avenues, pondering, "What if the road I choose is less enlightening than the others?" This unprecedented and absurd level of indecision is the very act of choosing becomes as daunting as the learning itself.

Here's the ironic twist of our quest for understanding: in our eagerness to grasp all that the world has to offer, we often find ourselves stuck at this crossroads. Rather than become frustrated at our inability to take even a single step, we should instead chuckle at the absurdity of this dilemma. The roads we choose not to take in our intellectual journeys thus become a metaphor for the endless possibilities that both excite and overwhelm us. There's such comedic irony in

having all the choices in the world yet feeling unable to choose.

In our collective trek through Absurdia, these roads are not just routes of learning but trails of laughter and self-discovery. After all, sometimes the most insightful lessons come from recognizing and embracing the absurdity of the choices we face.

Taming the Information Beast

To live to our fullest, we must do our best to seek out more ideas. But, how then do we tame the daunting creature known as the Information Beast? Bloated with data and insights from the digital realm, this beast presents a ridiculous yet challenging adversary. Its very nature — being vast, wild, and untamed — symbolizes the overwhelming surge of information we encounter daily.

However, taming this beast doesn't mean to conquer or subdue it, but to coexist with it harmoniously. We must discover ways to extract the nourishment it can offer us without being devoured by its enormity. One cannot simply charge at it with reckless abandon; instead, we must approach with the finesse of a librarian crossed with a lion tamer.

My tool of choice in this endeavor is the commonplace book, an artifact as quaint as it is

revolutionary. This simple tool allows us to capture the essence of what we learn, distilling the vast knowledge into digestible, meaningful snippets we can return to later for perusal. Like collecting gems from a vast mine, we extract only what we can cherish and utilize, leaving the overwhelming bulk behind.

The act of keeping a commonplace book is a delicate balance of selection and reflection, where each step is a piece of information carefully chosen and internalized. This method adds a layer of intention to our learning, transforming the chaotic influx of data into a curated collection of wisdom. By recognizing and giving permanence to your thoughts, you allow yourself to pursue ideas that you may have otherwise not even realized existed. It's both a rebellion against and a concession to our information-saturated world.

While we can't possibly know everything, what we choose to grasp should resonate with meaning and purpose. Also, taming the Information Beast shouldn't be a solitary battle. It must be a shared comedy, where discussions, debates, and shared reflections add to the communal understanding. In this way, the beast becomes less of a foe and more of a shared challenge, a source of amusement and wonder rather than fear and frustration.

Diversifying the Diet of Our Minds

So, in our quest to learn and understand, we must also learn to sift, select, and savor, turning the overwhelming into the enlightening, and in doing so, we find that the journey of taming is as rewarding as the knowledge itself. Just as a varied diet is essential for physical health, a broad spectrum of learning nourishes the mind, providing a balanced meal of wisdom, insight, and humor.

But, what do we do about our tendency to gorge on the familiar and comfortable, to snack solely on the sweets of preferred genres and subjects? Well, much like eating only potatoes, sticking to one kind of knowledge can lead to a bland, unbalanced mental diet. By branching out, we allow ourselves to sample the exotic flavors of quantum mechanics, the spicy theories of philosophy, or the rich, savory tales of history, enriching our minds with a Thanksgiving feast of thoughts and ideas.

Diversifying our intellectual diet doesn't mean randomly consuming everything in sight, though. It means selecting a variety of subjects with intention and curiosity. You must create a learning environment in which classic literature can coexist with modern podcasts, where science documentaries complement poetry readings. Such variety not only prevents the

intellectual malaise of monotony, but also sparks creativity and innovation, as ideas from different fields collide and coalesce in serendipitous fusion.

Additionally, this dietary diversity introduces us to the joyful absurdity of discovering connections between seemingly disparate topics. Who would have thought that lessons from ancient philosophy could apply to modern business practices, or that the principles of ballet could enhance understanding of physics? In the grand dining hall of knowledge, the most unexpected combinations can provide the most delightful and enlightening culinary experiences.

Learning to Recognize Everyday Learning Opportunities

As we begin to compile our various commonplace books, it's imperative that we not only consult literature and other created content. We must also take note of the quirks and serendipitous moments that occur in our daily lives. You can never predict when the mundane will meet the profound in the pages of your notes.

It's in fact possible to find deep life lessons in the simplest of daily tasks, like discovering principles of economics while haggling at a flea market, or coming to a stronger understanding the laws of physics by watching a cat navigate a narrow ledge. These moments, while often

overlooked by the common soul, are ripe with wisdom and humor, serving as inadvertent classrooms for the curious mind.

Learning should never be confined to structured environments or formal studies; rather, it must thrive in the chaos of everyday living. A casual conversation with a stranger can unravel the complexities of a foreign culture. A wrong turn during a routine commute can lead to a newfound appreciation for urban planning. Each day offers us a smorgasbord of learning opportunities as we venture beyond our front door, seasoned with the spice of unpredictability and the zest of happenstance.

How we choose to integrate learning into our daily lives is different for each of us. Perhaps you find yourself scribbling notes on a napkin while sipping coffee, capturing fleeting thoughts that may one day evolve into significant insights. Maybe you're the type to engage in deep philosophical debates with friends over dinner, turning casual meals into intellectual banquets.

Indeed, the digital age has amplified these opportunities, allowing us to learn from a global classroom without leaving our homes. The internet enables us to partake in learning from an endless array of sources – from scholarly articles to satirical blogs, from historical documentaries to viral TikToks. Each can add layers of understanding and amusement to our daily

lives, but only if consumed responsibly. We can't let our digital content consumption take away from real life content appreciation.

So, we must acknowledge that education is not just about formal training or academic pursuits. Lifelong learning is a continuous, often whimsical journey that intertwines with every aspect of our existence. These Chronicles of Absurdia will continue to celebrate this journey, reminding us to find joy and laughter in the unpredictable and often bizarre classroom of life.

Actionable Advice for Daily Learning

To have any lasting success in our pursuit of knowledge requires not just awareness but actionable strategies. We've already discussed the merits of keeping a commonplace book. Indeed, jotting down thoughts, quotes, ideas, and questions that arise throughout the day is a helpful tool. This can be a physical notebook or a digital app, tailored to capture the fleeting insights that spark during unexpected moments.

But beyond making note taking a regular part of our daily grind, here are some other practical tips to make the most of our lifelong learning adventures:

Establish a Learning Routine: Dedicate a specific time each day or week for deliberate learning. Whether

it's reading a chapter of a book, watching a documentary, or exploring a new hobby, having a routine ensures consistent growth amidst the chaos of daily life.

Set Diverse Learning Goals: Challenge yourself to explore topics outside your comfort zone. If you're a science enthusiast, try delving into the arts. If history is your forte, experiment with coding or understanding the complexities of modern technology. This diversity not only broadens your knowledge base but also encourages cognitive flexibility.

Engage in Conversational Learning: Social interactions should always be seen as opportunities to learn. Engage friends, family, or colleagues in discussions about new topics. Be open to their perspectives and experiences. These dialogues can provide deeper insights and enhance your understanding of complex subjects.

Reflect and Connect the Dots: Regularly take time to reflect on what you've learned recently, making connections between new knowledge and your existing experiences. This reflective practice can deepen understanding and reveal new layers of meaning in familiar concepts.

Utilize Online Resources Wisely: With the plethora of online courses, webinars, podcasts, and videos available, select resources that align with your learning

objectives and styles. Be mindful of information overload; focus on quality over quantity to avoid cognitive burnout.

Practice Mindful Observation: Make it a habit to observe your environment and experiences with curiosity. Mindful observation can transform mundane activities into rich learning experiences, revealing the extraordinary in the ordinary.

Document and Share Your Learning Journey: Beyond your commonplace book, writing about or teaching others what you've learned can solidify your understanding and provide new insights. Share your discoveries through blogs, social media, or community discussions to engage with the broader learning community.

By integrating these actionable steps into your daily life, you can navigate the absurd yet enriching landscape of learning with purpose and joy. Let's turn the pursuit of knowledge into a vibrant, lifelong adventure.

Closing Thoughts

Our daily expedition through the landscape of learning isn't merely an accumulation of facts and figures, but learning how to dance with the unknown. In our playful tussle with the mysteries of existence, we

rarely can know the outcome, and that's where the excitement comes in.

For many years, I thought that the best way to absorb new knowledge is to read every day. Sure, reading can be an important part of anyone's personal development. Not only is it an incredibly effective way to learn from other's mistakes and see different perspectives, but it can become the best kind of self-education. But, reading should only be part of the educational pie. You can be incredibly book-smart and be practically dumb, something I learned the hard way in my young adult years.

Still, I personally benefited immensely from my reading journal, which has evolved into my commonplace book. Whenever I come across a word I don't know, a phrase that catches my attention, or an idea that sticks with me, I write it down. These notes, which are often created out of habit, have become the basis for many of my future works, including quite a few editions of Chronicles of Absurdia.

It's really benefited me to sample many different avenues of human knowledge. I no longer interact with social media, however, because of the noise that requires too much time to sift through. But I do keep up with a variety of YouTube channels, blogs, and various other digital portals. Each thread of knowledge we weave adds

color and depth to my own understanding of the universe. Yet the full picture remains delightfully elusive, urging me ever onward to continue the exploration.

The great absurdity of learning is that the more we know, the more we realize the vastness of what we don't know. It's this paradox that keeps the learning journey exciting, infusing our quest with both humor and humility. We must accept that our learning paths will often be unpredictable, filled with laughter, mistakes, and unexpected turns. Along the way, we must relish the questions as much as the answers, and appreciating the bizarre beauty of not having all the pieces of the puzzle.

Cherish the moments of confusion and clarity alike, and continue to approach each day with curiosity, wonder, and a hearty sense of humor. Make an effort to learn something new at least once a day. Plan learning time for each day and create a routine around it. Learning must be a priority just as any other part of your life, even if you can carve out just a few minutes to devote to it. That means cutting out less-important things from your schedule, and it will be worth it in the long run. No matter what stage you're at in your life, investing in lifelong learning is the best choice anyone can make.

~ Amelia Desertsong

Doing What You Can May Be More Than You Think

"Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can." - Arthur Ashe

This quote from the late Arthur Ashe should make us pause and explore the true depth of our own beginnings and capabilities. Ashe was a trailblazer in the tennis world and the first African-American to compete at the international level. His own story embodies the essence of this quote: starting where you are with what you have. Considering how he spent his 49 years on this earth, we can learn much from his example.

This quote sounds like common sense, but it's deceptively simple wisdom. You can only start where you are, and you can only use what you have. Most importantly, you can only do what you can. So, today, we closely inspect this neatly packaged nugget of wisdom. Through Ashe's legacy, we're invited to ponder the inherent humor and wit in the human condition, where our starting points and resources, no matter how humble or grand, hold the potential to propel us toward unforeseen destinies.

Your Starting Point Should Be Your Advantage, Not Your Disadvantage

Most of us would likely enjoy the idea of choosing our own beginnings and circumstances of birth, like we're playing a role playing game. But, instead, we should see our starting points in the world, no matter how vastly different, as like the opening scenes of a play, rich with unscripted potential. No matter how modest or privileged our origins may seem, Ashe suggests that we shine a spotlight on the peculiar advantages of our beginnings. In fact, what may appear to be disadvantages may in fact become your greatest advantages.

Arthur Ashe is a particularly fine example of this notion. After all, his own inception in the annals of tennis history was marked by societal disadvantage. Being the first African-American to swing a racket on the international stage, Ashe's starting point was a testament to the transformative power of embracing his origins. What society deemed a disadvantage, Ashe wielded as a tool of change, leveraging his unique position to challenge and redefine norms. His journey illustrates the absurdity in our common lamentations over our own starting points. Our beginnings, however fraught with challenges, can be catalysts for extraordinary achievements.

In Ashe's case, he used his standing as an African-American to a definite advantage. As the only black man to ever win Wimbledon, Ashe brought awareness to

extremely important social issues, such as poverty and racial stereotyping. Beyond tennis, he became a prominent speaker. So, while he did start at a disadvantage in the eyes of society, Ashe launched both a successful tennis career and another as a social activist.

Sure, you can't change where you start from. But, you can very well change where you will go going forward. Each of us starts with certain advantages and disadvantages no matter our status. It's important to understand that there are both advantages and disadvantages to every starting point, even if the former aren't always obvious. Identifying those hidden advantages are an important step in beginning any endeavor.

Unfortunately, the narrative often fed to us is that starting at a disadvantage is a hurdle too high to overcome. This causes many of us to become steeped in defeatism and resignation. Yet, Ashe's life story is a deft subversion of this self-defeating narrative. He turned it on its head to showcase that every starting line, no matter its location, is a springboard for potential greatness. It's inspiring how one's perceived disadvantage can become a powerful tool, a source of motivation, and a unique vantage point from which to approach life's myriad challenges.

Sadly, the unexpected advantages we could derive from our starting points often go unrecognized, lost in the cacophony of societal expectations and comparisons. Our collective blindness to this potential is stunning. While we're quick to bemoan or boast about our origins, we're yet painfully slow to harness the latent power within them. Embracing where we come from, with all its peculiarities and unique challenges, is akin to finding hidden treasure in our backyard. It's overlooked by the common observer yet invaluable to those who seek out and find it.

So, we must laugh at the irony of our preconceived notions about starting points and find humor in our collective oversight. Let's embrace Ashe's wisdom in using our unique beginnings as a leverage point for growth and innovation. Ashe's life story is not just a chronicle of success against odds, but a beacon which illuminates advantages hidden within the very place we often wish to escape: our own starting point.

Identifying the Skills You Need to Follow Your Passions

Ironically, while we strive to keep our passions aloft, we often underestimate the breadth of our arsenal of skills. This is because in the grand scheme of things, we often focus on just one or two skills, fearing that

adding more will lead to a chaotic tumble. Yet, true success is often hidden behind the realization that the more skill building we do, the more adept we become at performing at our core tasks.

No skill that's learned or mastered is wasted effort. However, we must strive to build skills that are complimentary to our goals. Knowledge and understanding of seemingly unrelated topics and fields can become applicable in ways you would never expect. But, you have to recognize how what you've learned can apply to the things you care about.

So, the act of harnessing our full potential is rarely found in the pursuit of a singular passion. While noble to dedicate yourself in such a single-minded fashion, it's often shortsighted because inevitably we may well ignore the eclectic array of skills at our fingertips. Instead, we must harness our abundant talents, no matter how absurd they might seem. We should explore their capacities with the curiosity of a child in a candy store. Only then can we discover the unexpected ways they can interconnect and elevate our main passions.

A good example of this is someone who's striving to become a star baseball player. This figurative player, who's constantly honing specific talents like batting, pitching, base-running, or fielding might view these as the be-all and end-all of their craft. However, exploring

other interests and building skills in those areas — even those seemingly unrelated to baseball like swimming or chess — can enhance the player's game in unexpected ways. Skills that seem peripheral to our main passions can, in fact, be the ones that elevate us to new heights, offering a panoramic view of our potential.

One excellent real-life example of this is Mookie Betts, who in the midst of becoming an All-Star level baseball player, pursued professional bowling in the offseason. While you might just think of it as another competitive game for Mookie to keep himself in a winning mindset, there's more to it. I'm not sure if this is why Betts chose to pursue bowling at such a high level, but it turns out that bowling is a game that's all in the wrists and forearms. Wrist and forearm strength is also extremely important as a hitter in baseball. Ever since he rose the ranks in bowling, his baseball skills, especially at the plate, have increased by significant margins, too. While he'd been bowling since a young age, I don't believe it's a coincidence that Betts bowled a perfect 300 in 2017, then had a career baseball year in 2018.

Focusing too narrowly on our perceived "main" skills can blind us to the wealth of abilities we possess. Like a treasure chest of talents, each skill we acquire adds to our repertoire, waiting to be deployed in the most unforeseen, and sometimes hilarious, circumstances. The

arsenal of skills we accumulate isn't just a list on our resume, but a veritable Swiss Army knife of capabilities, ready to surprise, delight, and serve us in the multifaceted adventure of life.

You Can Only Do What You Can

This is the most important part: you really can only do what you really can. Back to our figurative aspiring ballplayer, it's likely time for him or her to face a sad truth that they simply might not have the physical skills necessary. A lack of physical flexibility may lead to chronic injuries while playing or limits to hand-eye coordination can make hitting the baseball a chore. Not everyone can rise to the highest level of competition like Ashe did in his own sport of tennis. Sometimes, determination and hard practice can help you to overcome physical limitations. But if you can't perform, then you can't.

That isn't the end of a baseball career, of course. Even a player who has limitations at hitting can still provide value in the field or on the bases. Even talented players have their strengths and weaknesses, which coaches identify and assign "natural" positions to these individuals. There are also players that simply make themselves indispensable as "utility" players who mastered multiple field positions. They could provide

value in a pinch, even if they're not great hitters or baserunners.

Just like these utility players who stick around in baseball organizations year-after-year, it's best to try playing everywhere you can. Diversifying your skill set makes you a better player in the short term, but versatility beyond baseball can also make you a more valuable human being in the long run.

For many, the realization that they cannot achieve a specific dream, like becoming a professional baseball player, is a bitter pill swallowed in the twilight of their efforts. But ironically, it's often through acknowledging our limitations that we discover new paths, ripe with unexplored potential. These limitations, then, transform from a barrier into a directional arrow, pointing us toward alternative avenues where our passions and existing skills can flourish in unexpected ways.

Let's propose that our limitations, much like the edges of a map, mark the beginning of uncharted territories rather than the end of our journey. Sure, not everyone will reach the pinnacle of their chosen field, no matter the depth of their passion or the rigor of their dedication. But, these limitations aren't simply stop signs, but also can serve to guideposts leading us to other opportunities we may not have previously considered.

Talent isn't everything. Just like it's good to try out all the different positions in baseball, diversifying your activities helps you become a well-rounded person. For example, playing a completely different sport could teach you training methods that you wouldn't ever connect to baseball. Those methods may enhance the skills that you already have excelled in previously, bringing you to a new level of mastery.

You can also study how coaches from all sorts of sports motivate (or demotivate) other players. This can help you to understand what motivational methods work best for you. These you may later use to help motivate your teammates and peers, as well. Turn your passion into something that can do a lot of good for others. In the end, this is often the best way to build the skills to help you succeed.

How can failing at your life dream actually be for the better? What you do is find something related to your passion. In the case of baseball, this could include working in a baseball front office. It could be working in sports marketing or sports writing. You then take all you've learned through your failures and successes. Share those experiences and those skills you worked on to help others.

This is why so many "failed" players become valuable, sought-after coaches or commentators in their

respective sports. While that's likely where our figurative ballplayer will end up, that's nothing to be ashamed of at all. In fact, our newly minted coach or analyst will likely lead to helping another aspiring ballplayer reach their potential. There are few things better in life than helping to coach others. You can be a coach in anything, believe it or not. Arthur Ashe used his relatively short life to great advantage, becoming a life coach using his own story as a basis. He really did all he could.

How to Make the Best of Your Limitations

As is standard for these "Chronicles of Absurdia," we now turn to summarizing actionable advice to take away from Ashe's example. What are the tangible steps we away from our exploration of skills, talents, and capabilities?

First and foremost, just as Ashe suggests, embrace your starting point with humor and grace. Recognize and accept where you are starting from. Whether it's a place of privilege or hardship, see it as the first scene in your own unique comedy of life. Laugh at the absurdity of circumstance and use it as a springboard for your journey. Acknowledge your roots, the peculiarities of your beginning, and use them as strengths rather than lamenting them as weaknesses.

Second, explore and expand your arsenal of skills, no matter how absurdly disparate they may seem. Diversify your skills with the playful curiosity of an artist exploring new mediums. Don't just focus on the skills directly related to your main passions. Instead, venture into new territories, learn from different disciplines, and connect seemingly unrelated dots. This could mean a lawyer taking dance classes or a scientist exploring poetry. The idea is to build a broad and somewhat absurd skill set that enhances your main pursuits in unexpected and innovative ways.

Third, redirect when faced with limitations. Acknowledge your limitations, not with resignation, but with the wit of a seasoned playwright who knows when to introduce a twist in the plot. When you hit a wall, instead of viewing it as a dead end, look for the door that's often hidden in plain sight. This is what we often refer to as pivoting; it may require shifting your path or finding alternative ways to channel your passion and skills.

Fourth, cultivate an above-average sense of adaptability. In the face of life's unpredictable swings, learn to pivot with a smile. This means being open to change, ready to laugh at surprises, and skilled at turning setbacks into stepping stones.

Finally, share your journey and grow with others. Again, in the spirit of Ashe, and coincidentally also these

Chronicles, share your stories of navigating life's absurdities with others. Mentorship and collaboration not only enhance your own journey, but also contribute to a larger community seeking growth and resilience. By helping others, you amplify the joy of living, creating ripples of impact that extend far beyond your own storyline.

Navigating the absurdity of life is about embracing the unexpected, laughing in the face of adversity, and continuously evolving. By adopting these actionable steps Ashe laid out in his inspirational talks, we can all become adept players in the grand, bizarre, and wonderfully absurd theatre of existence.

Closing Thoughts

As we wind down this essay, I have a few final thoughts stemming from Ashe's straightforward yet poignant wisdom. This final passage isn't just a conclusion to today's essay, but also a moment of introspection, a chance to muse over the serpentine path we tread in the quest for meaning and fulfillment in a world that often defies logic and expectation.

One of these lingering thoughts is an urge to remember that you need to use your yesterdays as learning experiences, not burdens to be treated as baggage. Another is to stop wasting your time trying to

improve at something you're not able to. Recognizing that is the hardest part.

I hope that our exploration of Ashe's quote has helped you to reframe your own limitations not as tragic endings but as comedic twists in our storyline, where the finale of one act is the prologue to another. The absurdity of our limitations isn't in their existence, but in our perception of them as finalities rather than transitions. They are integral parts of our life journey that propel us toward new horizons.

As we pivot from the paths we can't travel successfully, we uncover routes previously hidden from view, each with its own set of adventures and potential for growth. So, doing what you can isn't an admission of defeat; it's a declaration of our ability to find humor and possibility in the face of our limitations.

Personal growth isn't a linear ascent but a spiraling dance, one that intertwines the comic with the tragic, the trivial with the profound. Our growth is punctuated by moments of absurdity, where the unexpected becomes the norm, and the norm is perpetually questioned. Growth isn't merely about achieving predefined goals but about expanding the very horizons of what we deem possible and meaningful.

After all, contribution is the natural companion to growth. Our individual narratives, replete with their peculiarities and idiosyncrasies, are chapters in a larger story of communal evolution. By contributing our unique perspectives and talents, we not only enrich our own lives but also enhance the collective human experience. It's a beautiful paradox that, in giving, we receive; in teaching, we learn; and in sharing, we multiply our joys and diminish our sorrows.

In the end, the arsenal of skills we possess is more than a toolkit for personal success. It gives us a palette for painting a life full of color, laughter, and the joy of unexpected discovery. As we navigate through our passions, we must recognize the vast potential that lies within us, waiting to be harnessed in all its glorious and whimsical complexity.

In anything that you do, make sure that you're always growing and refining your skills. Someday you may find yourself in a position to mentor others in your own passions. By helping others that share your passions, you'll find your own passions will grow, as well. Remember to turn your disadvantages into advantages. Furthermore, try to turn your advantages into boons for not only yourself, but everyone around you.

~ Amelia Desertsong

How to Be More Honest with Yourself

With a light-hearted touch and a keen eye for the absurd, these "Chronicles of Absurdia" are meant to serve as a guide through the twisted pathways of our minds. Here in the hallowed halls of self-reflection, we learn that to embrace the absurdity of our existence is a triumphant leap into a more honest, authentic life. But first, to prepare ourselves properly to embark on this ludicrous but enlightening journey, we must be truly honest with ourselves about who we are and what we really need out of life.

Each of us have different self-imposed limits to how honest we can be with ourselves. However, these limits are often derived from an imperfect self-reflection; they are based on what we see through the looking glass of our own deceptions, fears, and follies. As we peel back the layers of our constructed realities, we find that the truth about ourselves is often stranger, and even funnier, than fiction.

Why, then, do we hide behind the masks of our own making? What comedic errors lead us astray in our quest for authenticity? Here, we shall uncover the ridiculousness of our self-deceptions, the ironic fears that misguide our steps, and the ludicrous mistakes from which we shy away.

Let's learn together why it's worth challenging and pushing past our preconceived notions of what we believe about ourselves and the world around us. How can being honest with yourself help you better achieve your goals and live your life on your own terms?

Why Does Being Honest With Yourself Matter?

Being honest with yourself means having control over your thoughts and actions. Only you can hold yourself accountable for living up to your ideals and recognizing when you fall short of those standards. Honesty is an important aspect of self-improvement, yet many people would rather make up excuses for themselves in order to not make the hard choices.

When you're not honest with yourself, you can become oblivious to the truth of your situation. This means often giving into circumstances instead of rising above them. For example, if you want more from a job, you likely won't know what you should do to accomplish that goal. But, if you simply settle for the status quo out of fear of losing that job, you won't come up with potential solutions to get what you really want out of life.

So, why is it that we so often practice the art of self-deception? For so many of us, within our inner lives,

we're constantly sidestepping the truth with a grace that would earn a standing ovation for its comedic timing. Let's put this in perspective by looking at it from a third-person view.

Think about how much inaction we see in our modern world. How many business executives fear public speaking, yet have something important to say, but convince themselves they're merely "avoiding unnecessary meetings" to justify this evasion. How many aspiring artists have you met who tell themselves they're just "waiting for the right inspiration," while their paints dry and canvases remain blank? These scenarios become comedic sketches of self-defeatism. They're unfortunate examples of when we choose the comfort of reading from familiar scripts over the daunting prospect of a genuine, unscripted existence.

Our self-deceptions become like invisible clowns, juggling our true desires and fears with expert precision, keeping us entertained so we might never notice the truth sneaking up behind us. We'll laugh at the absurdity of someone walking with a "kick me" sign taped to their back; yet in our own way, we parade around with similar signs that say "deceive me" in bold letters. We invite our psyche to play pranks on our perception of reality just so we can get home, Netflix, and chill.

Still, is there a deeper reason why we partake in this comedic masquerade? Is it the fear of facing the unknown aspects of ourselves? Do we simply long for the consistent comfort of the familiar, however ridiculous it may be? We shouldn't just laugh at the silliness of our self-deceptions; we must also peer behind the curtain in questioning why we perform these elaborate acts of self-sabotage.

There's an inherent absurdity in lying to ourselves. So, like a comedian, we must use humor and wit to reveal deeper truths. When we confront the absurdity of our little lies to ourselves, we begin to see that our self-deceptions aren't just harmless quirks. They become well-choreographed routines to avoid confronting the more challenging aspects of reality, no matter how rewarding doing so might be.

The Paradox of Fear and Honesty

Venturing deeper into the maze of self-awareness, we discover a paradoxical relationship between fear and honesty. First off, we all have fears, whether they involve failure, rejection, or a loss of control. These emotional bottlenecks exist to make us think through our decision making process. So, while it's normal to have such fears, it's important not to let them get in the way of following through. It may take some time and practice, but

learning how to deal with fears can help you reach your goals.

Unfortunately, fears can make you do strange things, including isolating yourself and even leading to self-abusive behavior. However, being honest about your fears first means admitting that they exist. This is where the paradox enters: Fear loves to play dress-up, often cloaking itself in rationalizations so elaborate they would make even the most seasoned playwrights envious. The fear of failure often masquerades as perfectionism, leading us to procrastinate on our dreams until they become the jokes of our own narratives. There's also the fear of rejection, commonly disguised as pride, causing us to push others away, only to perform solo acts in the tragicomedy of our lives.

So, in order to break through this paradox, you must learn to be honest about why you fear what you do. Only then, armed with such knowledge, can you resolve to face these fears head-on. Otherwise, we let our fears get the best of us, often leading us into bad habits that can be self-destructive in the long run. However, it's imperative to not belittle these fears, as they exist for a reason, but rather to diminish their grip on our script.

Sometimes we let our fears get so far away from us that our daily lives become like a scene from a sitcom where the protagonist keeps opening a door only to find

something more ludicrous behind it. To avoid this hilarious but crippling scenario, we must confront the layers of fear, each revealing a more absurd excuse for not being honest with ourselves.

Now, this doesn't mean our fears can't be used to our advantage in our quest for greater self-awareness, though. In fact, acknowledging our fears can be the key to unlocking our true potential. When we start to question why we're afraid, the answers often lead to the most unexpected comedic relief. For instance, fearing to change careers because we might fail, only to realize we've been the understudy in our own life's play, waiting for a chance to take the lead role.

So, certain fears can serve as a sign that change needs to be made. You may need a change of pace, or you've found different work you can do that's more fulfilling to you and more in line with your specific skill set. Once you begin to be honest about the reason for your fears, you can start taking steps to figure out how to confront them and what they're gating from you in a constructive, but timely manner.

By facing our fears with honesty, we can begin to write a new script for our lives. One where fear is no longer the antagonist, but a character that, when understood, adds depth and development to our personal story. Don't be like the person who feared leaving a stable

yet unfulfilling job. Be the person who discovered a passion that turned into a thriving business, making you wonder why you were ever afraid in the first place.

Learning From Our Mistakes

Many times, our fears result from the inevitability of human error. But, no matter how ridiculous our blunders might be, we must heed the lessons they begrudgingly teach us. Mistakes are often embarrassing, sometimes painful, but always instructive. Consider the times we've stubbornly pushed a door marked "pull" or the metaphorical equivalent in our decisions, persisting in the wrong direction despite clear signs to change course.

Some of our most latent fears emerge from past experiences, where something traumatic or extremely unpleasant happened to us. Sometimes, this is because we made a key mistake, but many times, we blame ourselves for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. It's important in these cases to recognize that those fears, while not unfounded, are in the past. They served as defense mechanisms to cope with circumstances that are often no longer present.

Other fears come from misconceptions, misinformation, and sometimes just pure ignorance. This is why once you identify your fears, if they aren't giving

you useful information, then you need to learn how to overcome them. Sometimes, our fears come simply from us not knowing why someone or something isn't how we expect it to be. Coming to more of an understanding of these things we fear can help us to drive these irrational fears away.

Fortunately, if we take a step back, we can find humor in hindsight. Think of an entrepreneur who invested in a trend just as it was going out of style, only to realize that failure was the catalyst for a more successful venture. Consider the individual who, in a bid to avoid confrontation, ends up in the most convoluted situations, creating a sitcom-worthy series of events that could have been avoided with a simple honest conversation. Perhaps those events inspire an actual sitcom that becomes a successful streaming series.

These anecdotes serve as comic relief, reminding us that while our errors might trip us up, they also provide the momentum to leap forward. They teach us that dwelling on mistakes is like replaying a blooper reel, amusing at first but ultimately a distraction from writing the next scene of our lives. Learning from our mistakes means not just acknowledging the fall, but appreciating the tumble. It's about transforming our errors from tragic to comic, shifting the narrative from a tale of woe to a story of growth. In doing so, we not only lighten the

burden of our blunders but also prepare ourselves for the next act with wisdom and a sense of humor.

So, when you are fearful of a situation, it's OK to tread lightly. But, you must still teach yourself to move forward one step at a time, or you'll be walking in place ad infinitum. In our daily adventures through Absurdia, we must learn to view our mistakes as plot twists, necessary deviations that add depth and character to our story. By embracing the human comedy of errors, we not only forgive ourselves for being imperfect but also celebrate our capacity to learn, adapt, and ultimately, find humor in our human experience. Thus, learning from our mistakes isn't just a lesson in humility; it's an exercise in rewriting our script, where each error edits our journey towards a more honest and hilariously authentic self.

How to Be More Honest With Your Fears

As is the basis of these Chronicles of Absurdia, we always break from our exploration of the absurd to offer practical steps to turn this humorous introspection into actionable change:

First, acknowledge the ludicrous nature of your own self-deceptions. Laugh at them. This isn't about mockery but about recognizing the absurdity in a way that diminishes their power over you. When you catch

yourself in a ridiculous lie or denial, pause and think about how this moment would play out in a sitcom. This perspective can make the situation seem less daunting and more manageable.

Then, use humor as a tool to confront and ultimately conquer your fears. Write down your fears and then try to find something amusing or exaggerated about them. This approach can help to reduce their emotional weight, making them seem less threatening and more like challenges that you can tackle with a smile.

Second, reflect, don't ruminate. Stop dwelling on what goes wrong, and instead plan your next move Reflect on your mistakes and setbacks with a sense of humor and detachment. Sometimes, it's easy to get caught up in dwelling on your setbacks. Instead, stop and think about what went wrong. Did you have an off day or a bad week? Did you lose out on a lucrative opportunity because of an outside factor, such as another person's actions?

Keep a journal where you not only write down what went wrong but also imagine how these situations could be scenes in a comedy show. This practice can help you learn from your mistakes without falling into the trap of overthinking and self-blame. Then, figure out how you can make sure those setbacks don't happen to you again.

Ask yourself how you can improve your thought process and how you can increase your chances of success next time. Remember that everyone makes mistakes, but not everyone allows themselves to learn from them and move on successfully. Sometimes, failures will happen due to no one's fault at all, due to unexpected circumstances or results. Just take the next steps you need in order to move forward.

Third, remember, you're not alone in lying to yourself. Lying to ourselves can seem an attractive way to help us get through our days by allowing us to ignore uncomfortable aspects of our lives. Unfortunately, in the long term, this mindset isn't productive. The sooner you can admit you lie too much to yourself, and start being honest about your life, you'll be able to take productive steps toward changing yourself and your life for the better.

But, also don't judge yourself harshly for doing this. People are endlessly complicated. Even if you're being totally honest with yourself, chances are high that there's plenty you don't know about your own personality and reactions. Work on eliminating self-criticism from your life, even when things do go wrong. Beating yourself up doesn't help you solve anything.

So, it helps to surround yourself with people who appreciate the humor in life's challenges and can laugh

along with you. This support network can provide perspective, encouragement, and comic relief when you're taking life too seriously. They act as your audience, offering applause and laughter, reminding you that life is not just a series of challenges, but also a stage for joy and humor.

Lastly, change your mindset with laughter. It's easy to think of ourselves as being victim of circumstances. But, human beings are so much more than our circumstances. When we change our own perspective on how we look at things, we can then start changing our outlook, which can lead to positive change in the real world.

Whenever you find yourself slipping into negative or self-defeating thoughts, try to twist them into a humorous light. Start changing your mindset today by identifying your thoughts that aren't serving you. These include the ways you talk about yourself, your situation, or people around you. Now, re-frame these thoughts as goals to achieve and come up with honest solutions for each of them.

By focusing on solutions rather than circumstances, your thoughts turn to how to make real connections, rather than allowing your circumstances to define you. If you change your mindset to one of honest reflection, you will watch your life improve significantly.

Embracing this lighter, more playful approach can lead to profound changes in how you view yourself and the world around you, turning the path toward self-awareness into an enjoyable adventure filled with laughter and learning.

Closing Thoughts: Changing the Script by Confronting Our Truth

Changing the script of our lives means that climax of confronting our truth must take center stage. We can't just tweak a line or two; we need to recognize that we are the playwrights of our existence, capable of transforming our entire narrative through the power of self-honesty and humor.

Our life's script isn't set in stone, but is more like a play in perpetual rehearsal. Improvisation and adaptation are not just allowed but encouraged. We've seen how acknowledging the absurdities of self-deception, facing our fears with a chuckle, and learning from our mistakes with a light heart can change individual scenes in our life. Now, let's apply these lessons to rewrite our story with a new, more honest and joyful outlook.

Changing the script means actively choosing not to be a passive character in our own story, buffeted by the whims of circumstance and comedy of errors. Instead, we step into the role of the lead actor, directing our path with intention and wit. We must shift from a mindset that sees

life as a series of unfortunate events to one that views each experience as a scene in a larger, more meaningful comedy. Every challenge is an opportunity for growth and every setback a setup for a future punchline.

To truly change the script, we must do more than just play with words; we need to embody the change in our actions. This means setting the stage for a new narrative where honesty, not illusion, guides our plot. Laughter shouldn't be used not as a shield from reality but as a bridge to greater understanding and connection.

However, it won't be easy, but of course, nothing worthwhile ever is. After all, confronting the truth requires courage, commitment, and training. Refusing to be honest with yourself can only lead to self-delusion, costing you valuable growth and learning opportunities. If you need to improve your life, confronting the truth is essential.

If you're struggling with your current truth, try writing down a list of things that make you unhappy. Every answer will likely be painful, but once you do this exercise, you'll realize which things are completely out of your control and which are in your control. Then, focus on the things you can control and do something about them. The things you can't control you must learn to let go.

By rewriting our script with honesty and humor, we don't just change how we view our past mistakes and fears; we transform how we approach each new day, scene, and act. We become both the authors of our own stories and the creators of our own joy, crafting a life that's not only more truthful but also more enjoyable.

We've learned to laugh at the quirks of our nature while also recognizing the transformative power of self-honesty. By embracing the absurd, we don't diminish the significance of our experiences; rather, we enrich them, adding depth and nuance to our understanding of the human condition. These Chronicles of Absurdia, after all, are a celebration of life's inherent contradictions, a testament to the fact that within the ridiculous lies the sublime.

As we close this chapter of these Chronicles, we carry forward the liberating realization that our lives are not fixed narratives but fluid stories, continually shaped by our courage to confront the truth, however absurd it may be, and our willingness to laugh, learn, and grow from it. The script is ours to write, so becoming the most capable playwright we can is an absolute must.

~ Amelia Desertsong

Self-Esteem and Learning Your True Worth

Seeking self-esteem has always been a challenge for me. It's been an elusive companion, often fickle as the weather in spring, performing vanishing acts along with my self-worth just when I thought I had it in the spotlight. In my own inner world, my internal monologues are not gallant knights on noble steeds, but rather awkward jesters tumbling through the court of my psyche.

This struggle with self-esteem is a deeply personal one, often hidden behind the façade of everyday smiles and accomplishments. It's like daily attending a masquerade where everyone's true face is hidden behind a mask. We often parade in a grandiose procession, cloaked in the trappings of our public personas, while secretly grappling with the absurd reality that our internal sense of worth is as stable as a house of cards in a breeze.

Yet, I've come to realize that the path to building self-esteem, while fraught with challenges, is surprisingly straightforward. At its core, it's all about mindset. Self-esteem isn't a fixed attribute, but rather a malleable state of mind, which properly managed can open doors to endless possibilities.

So, today, we dive headfirst into this aspect of Absurdian society, hoping to unmask the bizarre and often humorous truths about our self-worth. Perhaps, we'll soon learn how to dance to the erratic rhythm of our self-esteem with a bit more grace and a lot more laughter.

The Elusive Nature of Self-Worth

Self-esteem often plays the lead role in the mysterious drama, which unfolds slowly and erratically every day, shrouded in the shadows of our consciousness. Its presence is as elusive as the Cheshire Cat, appearing fully formed in one moment and vanishing the next, leaving behind only a lingering smile of assurance. We chase after it through the corridors of our achievements and social interactions, only to find it slipping like sand through our fingers when we try to grasp it too tightly.

This inherently absurd chase seems fit for a silent film comedy where the protagonist runs after a hat blown away by the wind, only to have it perpetually just out of reach. But, this is a chase we run internally. Externally, we sport elaborate costumes of success and confidence, hoping to capture the essence of self-worth at least superficially. So, we often forget that such esteem isn't an external prize to be won. Yet, the script we're handed by society suggests that self-esteem is a static, tangible

asset, like a trophy on a shelf, rather than the fluid, intangible thing it truly is.

Such absurdity becomes even more pronounced when we consider how we measure this intangible quality. Is it the number of likes on a social media post? The approval in a boss's nod? Perhaps the reflection of pride in a parent's eyes? These metrics are as varied as they are bizarre. Yet, to some degree, we all partake in this odd ritual, seeking validation in the echoes of others' perceptions.

The most comic irony in our pursuit of self-esteem is that we often engage in behaviors that undermine it. We seek it in crowded rooms and quiet moments, in the applause of the audience, and the silence of solitude. All the while we're forgetting that it is, in fact, an inside job. Understanding and nurturing our self-worth isn't about acquiring external accolades, but recognizing the intrinsic value that exists within us. However, while this task sounds hilariously simple, it's actually intricately complex.

Why It's Important to Constantly Be Cultivating Self-Esteem

Let's for a moment pretend that self-esteem is something you cultivate like a garden. In this imaginary plot, though, self-esteem isn't just a plant, but its

presence is the very essence of the garden itself. This garden, which also grows our self-worth, requires constant nurturing — water, sunlight, and care — to flourish. Neglect it, and the once vibrant foliage begins to wilt, the flowers lose their luster, and the soil becomes barren. The garden of self-esteem, left untended, mirrors the internal desolation we experience when we ignore our intrinsic value.

This neglect can manifest in various ways, often subtle and insidious. We engage in a peculiar form of horticultural sabotage, shying away from the nourishment of positive self-talk and self-compassion, and instead, dousing it with the harsh pesticides of criticism and doubt. It's akin to watering plants with vinegar, expecting them to thrive, and then scratching our heads in bewildered disappointment when they wither.

As a result, we might find ourselves shying away from challenges, fearing failure more than seeking opportunities for growth. Our decisions can become clouded by what others think, leaving little room for our own authentic desires and aspirations. Without properly tended self-worth, we're left vulnerable to the harsh elements of criticism, doubt, and negativity.

Moreover, just as a neglected garden becomes vulnerable to weeds and pests, an untended self-esteem makes us susceptible to the invasive species of external validation. We begin to measure our worth by the accolades and acknowledgments from our peers, mistaking these fleeting affirmations for genuine self-appreciation. This dependency creates a fragile ecosystem where our sense of self can be easily uprooted by a harsh word or a disapproving glance.

Those of us who lack sufficient self-esteem find ourselves a precarious position that can lead to emotional turbulence and an unstable sense of self. This reliance can be debilitating, placing our sense of value in the hands of people and circumstances beyond our control. Furthermore, ignoring our self-esteem can affect our relationships and interactions. Without a firm grounding in our own worth, we may struggle to set healthy boundaries, leading to relationships that are unbalanced or even toxic. Our communication may become inhibited, as expressing our true thoughts and feelings becomes daunting when we doubt our own value.

We often fail to realize that our self-worth shouldn't be contingent upon the unpredictable weather of external opinion or the changing seasons of life's circumstances. Instead, it requires the steady, daily care of acknowledging our strengths and accept our

imperfections. Like a gardener who tends to her plot with dedication, we must cultivate our self-esteem with a similar blend of patience, persistence, and love. So, we must remove the weeds of negative self-perception, plant the seeds of self-acknowledgment, and nurture them with actions that affirm our inherent worth.

The Absurdities of External Validation

In our saga of cultivating self-esteem, though, our quest for external validation is still like a wild goose chase, filled with ironic twists and turns. Even the most self-confident among us will still often find ourselves on a treadmill of approval, sprinting to the rhythm of societal applause, only to realize we're not moving forward in building our own self-worth. This pursuit is often as absurd as it is futile, like a dog chasing its tail, round and round, in an endless loop of expectation and disappointment.

We live in a world where the scales of self-esteem are frequently tipped by the weight of others' opinions. It's a bizarre theater where our roles and scripts are often handed to us by an audience that changes its mood with the wind. We perform, seeking applause and fearing boos, and we naturally allow these external reactions to dictate the narrative of our self-worth. The irony, of course, is that in this relentless pursuit of validation from

others, we become actors in our own lives, often forgetting our authentic self waiting in the wings.

This dependency on external validation is like building a house on sand; it may stand tall when the weather is fair, but it's vulnerable to collapse at the first sign of a storm. We gauge our value on compliments, likes, promotions, and other external markers, which although gratifying, are as transient as clouds on a windy day. The absurdity peaks when we realize that we are outsourcing our self-worth to entities and individuals who are as fallible and capricious as ourselves.

Such a quest for external approval often leads us into a paradoxical trap: the more we seek it, the more elusive genuine self-esteem becomes. It’s a cosmic joke of sorts, where the punchline is the realization that real self-worth cannot be found in the mirrored reflections of societal approval, but must be mined from the deeper strata of our inner selves. We poke fun at this absurdity not to belittle our natural desire for connection and recognition, but to illuminate the folly of placing the entirety of our self-value in the hands of an unpredictable external world.

Like a magician pulling rabbits out of a hat, we must learn to conjure our self-esteem from within. We must recognize that the only applause that truly matters is the one we give ourselves. Even the most careful

cultivators of self-esteem still fall prey to external validation; after all, it's only natural that as social creatures we want to share the fruits of our labors with others.

So, navigating this absurd landscape of validation requires a shift in perspective, a kind of mental acrobatics, where we learn to appreciate the applause but not depend on it. Sometimes, we must offer ourselves the standing ovation we deserve, independent of the external crowd's reaction. In doing so, we transform the absurdity of external validation into a narrative of empowerment. Our self-esteem must no longer cast as a character in someone else's play, but as the star of our own extraordinary show.

Decoupling Performance from Self-Worth

Perhaps one of the most comical plot twists in our mission to build self-worth is the way we often tie our self-esteem to our performance, particularly in professional settings. This linkage is as preposterous as a cat attempting to catch the red dot of a laser pointer, endlessly chasing something that, in reality, is just an illusion of control and stability. Such folly begins with the mistaken belief that our job titles, salaries, and professional achievements are accurate measures of our true value.

Like a clown juggling too many balls at once, we frantically try to keep all aspects of our work in perfect harmony, fearing that dropping even one might reveal our supposed inadequacies. This performance becomes a circus act where the tightrope of self-worth is suspended over the gaping mouth of failure. Thus, our self-esteem becomes a spectator sport for colleagues and superiors.

Such absurd conflation leads to a precarious existence where one's self-regard is as volatile as the stock market, rising and falling with each success and setback. It's a world where a missed deadline or a failed project can feel like an existential crisis, a direct hit to the core of our being, rather than just a professional hiccup.

In today's fast-paced world, it's alarmingly easy to equate our self-worth with market value — a dangerous misconception. Our value isn't just a figure on a paycheck or an hourly rate. We should respect and cherish our talents and abilities, irrespective of external validations. So, the real challenge lies in decoupling self-esteem from performance. While this is especially problematic in environments where our self-worth is often erroneously tethered to our job achievements, it's still possible.

We must accept that while our jobs and careers are significant, they are but one act in the multi-act play of our lives. Our roles as employees, leaders, or

entrepreneurs are characters we embody, not the sum total of who we are. The challenge we face lies in separating the character from the actor, acknowledging that the performance on the stage of work is just one aspect of our multifaceted selves.

To achieve this separation, we must practice seeing ourselves as directors of our own plays. These professional achievements are scenes that contribute to the narrative, but don't define it. Such a renewed perspective allows us to appreciate our work-related successes and learn from our failures without allowing either to dominate our self-image.

We must learn to take intermissions, moments of pause, where we step back from our professional roles and reconnect with the other dimensions of our identity. Whether it's indulging in hobbies, spending time with loved ones, or simply enjoying moments of solitude, these intermissions are crucial for maintaining a balanced sense of self that isn't overly reliant on any single aspect of our existence.

Like a method actor who forgets to break character after the play is over, we too can become so engrossed in our professional roles that we lose sight of the larger narrative of our lives. By decoupling performance from self-worth, we allow ourselves to appreciate the full range of our character, beyond the applause and critiques of the

audience. So, we can turn the page on a new chapter, one where our self-esteem isn't a reflection of our performance, but a celebration of our intrinsic, unchangeable value.

Actionable Steps to Build Healthy Self-Esteem

Building self-esteem can be a lot like adopting a pet dragon: it's a fascinating, slightly intimidating, but ultimately rewarding endeavor that requires consistent attention and care. Each day presents an opportunity to feed and nurture this mythical creature, transforming the potentially destructive fire-breather into a magnificent ally in our journey through life.

The true meaning of self-esteem is often obscured by the noise of societal norms and expectations. Self-esteem is more than a mere academic psychological term; we must build it through a uniquely personal journey of recognizing and valuing our intrinsic worth.

In order to navigate the whimsical world of self-esteem enhancement, we must adopt a series of actionable steps. The immediate actions lay the groundwork, the short-term actions build the structure, and the long-term actions expand the edifice, creating a cathedral of self-respect and mutual appreciation. Each of these steps guides us closer to the treasure of unwavering self-worth.

Immediate Actions: Redefining Self-Esteem

Begin with a daily ritual of self-reflection, a quiet moment to introspect and acknowledge personal strengths and achievements. This is like looking into a mirror, not to scrutinize flaws, but to celebrate the unique individual reflected back. Each day write down self-affirmations such as "I am competent" and "I am worthy" and allowing these beliefs to guide us towards positive action.

Next, identify and appreciate your talents and abilities, viewing them as intrinsic gifts rather than commodities valued by societal standards. Consider keeping a journal where you can jot down these strengths and any of your achievements that come to mind, making them tangible and more real. This step is about recognizing the artistry in your own life's work, whether it's cooking, writing, problem-solving, or empathizing with others.

Short-term Actions: Building Foundations for Your Self-Worth

Practice daily Self-Respect by setting boundaries that honor your values, time, and energy. This is like building a fortress around your self-esteem, protecting it from the potential siege of external criticism and self-doubt. Treat yourself with the kindness and understanding you would

offer a dear friend. This means forgiving yourself for mistakes, celebrating small victories, and speaking to yourself with compassion.

This practice involves recognizing our daily achievements, no matter how small, and acknowledging them with the same enthusiasm as a child who has successfully tied their shoes for the first time. It's about learning to high-five ourselves for getting through another day, mastering a new skill, or simply managing to stay sane in a world that often seems designed to test our patience.

Long-term Actions: Extending the Love Outward

Extend this newfound self-respect and love outward by treating others in a way that helps them feel valued and respected. This can involve showing empathy, offering support, and celebrating their successes, which in turn reinforces your own sense of self-worth. Engage in community activities or groups where mutual respect and support are the norms. This will not only help others but also provide you with a sense of belonging and contribution, further enhancing your self-esteem.

The journey towards self-love and self-esteem may begin as a solitary quest, but it's best if it grows into more of a communal celebration of individual worth. Humor

plays a pivotal role in this process. Laughing at our mistakes and misfortunes, not with derision but with affection, helps to soften the often harsh self-critique that withers our self-esteem. It's like watching a blooper reel of our own lives, finding amusement in the missteps, and learning to applaud the effort rather than the outcome. Sharing your bloopers with others can help others to recognize that their own missteps aren't unhappy endings, but stepping stones in our trek through Absurdia.

Thus, these steps towards nurturing self-esteem become a sort of art form, a creative process that combines the realism of our flaws with the idealism of our potential. In this ongoing endeavor, we become both the sculptor and the clay, shaping ourselves with intention, humor, and an unwavering commitment to personal development. In the "Chronicles of Absurdia," this practice is not just a chapter but the central theme, a story of transformation that invites laughter, reflection, and, most importantly, a deep-seated appreciation for the beautifully absurd journey of cultivating self-worth.

In the grand scheme, building self-esteem is less about erecting a monument of perfection and more about assembling a mosaic of experiences, thoughts, and feelings, each piece contributing to the colorful and cohesive whole. We must craft a daily narrative, for both

ourselves and those around us, that highlights our strengths, accepts our weaknesses, and celebrates our continuous growth. By taking these steps, we not only build our self-esteem but also contribute to a culture where self-worth is recognized as a universal treasure, valuable in its own right, and deserving of celebration.

Closing Thoughts

Wrapping up, we've found that nurturing self-esteem isn't a linear quest with a definitive end. Instead, it's a continuous, winding path filled with unexpected turns and delightful revelations. We now realize that self-esteem isn't a trophy to be won or a summit to be conquered. Instead, it's a garden to be tended — ever-evolving and dynamically changing with the seasons of life. This journey is about embracing the comedy of errors that is human existence, learning to laugh at our follies, and finding joy in the process of self-discovery.

We've also discovered that the paradox of self-esteem is that the more we search for it outside ourselves, the more elusive it becomes. Like the mythical pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, it can become a prize that seems forever just out of reach, especially when we seek it through the lens of external validation and societal benchmarks. Yet, when we turn our gaze inward, engaging in the daily practices of self-reflection,

self-respect, and community connection, we find that this treasure has been within us all along, waiting to be recognized and appreciated.

Perhaps the greatest hurdle to the cultivation of my own self-esteem is my negative self-talk. Pruning these seemingly insignificant statements from our internal monologue and offhand statements is a task that can be as challenging as wrestling a porcupine. But, it's imperative to recognize the prickly barbs of self-doubt and gently removing them before they can cause too much discomfort. This process involves replacing negative thoughts with positive counterparts, a mental sleight of hand that shifts the focus from what we lack to what we abundantly possess.

So, let's remind ourselves that self-esteem is cultivated through practice; it's not a pinnacle that can be conquered. We must embrace our flaws, while celebrating our strengths, and being kind to ourselves every step of the way.

~ Amelia Desertsong

Making Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Visible

I personally have suffered from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, also known as ME/CFS, since 2015 when I finished my nearly six months of chemotherapy. Consistently doctors refused to acknowledge my symptoms as anything besides laziness. It's lucky that I sought a second opinion, discovered the enormous tumor that should've killed me, and started on chemotherapy right away. While the four-month long treatment saved my life, it also worsened the fatigue the cancer gave me, along with some other more manageable issues.

Thankfully, the CDC now recognizes CFS as a legitimate health issue. Unfortunately, even they admit there is no cure, and treatment is simply managing exertion and stress. This is, of course, impossible for anyone who is forced to work full-time, which is why I nearly dropped dead in early 2020.

On top of my chronic fatigue, I also enjoy diminished lung capacity, a direct result of the cancer and also a side effect of one of the chemotherapy drugs. I also enjoy nerve damage, from the other chemotherapy drug, which isn't entirely debilitating, but some days, it hurts like hell. You may wonder why I use the verb 'enjoy' but it's either say that or 'lament,' Which way are you going to frame your disabilities when we're given just one

stupid body to inhabit in our numbered trips around the sun?

Navigating the Tides of Chronic Fatigue

Living with chronic fatigue is like sailing on a sea that oscillates unpredictably between calm clarity and a foggy haze. This condition brings an uneven rhythm to life, characterized by an ebb and flow of energy that defies conventional understanding. On some days, my mind is sharp, my body (mostly) cooperative, granting moments of crystal-clear productivity. Then, without warning, this clarity gives way to a dense fog, where both physical and mental energies are as elusive as shadows in the night.

Some days I have the physical capability, but not the mental focus. Other times, my brain will be turned up to eleven, but my body is incapable of even taking simple notes on what I want to do. Typically, I only have three or four good days out of seven each week. In the midst of when it hits extremely hard, it can wipe out a day and ruin my best-laid plans.

For the past few years, the constant sudden onset of "bad days" creates an apprehension that dampens my spirit. It makes some moments feel like a Sisyphean challenge to remain awake. But, I've made the conscious choice to focus on building my mental, emotional, and

spiritual resilience by persisting. My ability to keep going lies in expanding my horizons, even in the face of my adverse physical condition.

I've learned to find an intricate, paradoxical beauty in these rhythms of light and shadow. These past few months, I've been teaching myself to gain wisdom in the midst of these rapid shifts between energy and malaise. Whenever I can't work, I instead watch videos that educate me on certain topics that interest me. I'll have my browser read articles aloud. When I can't work, I do everything I can to learn.

Correctly nourished and guided, the human spirit has the wonderful ability to navigate the most unpredictable situations. When the haze is inevitable, but unpredictably timed, we must learn to appreciate and make better use of the clarity; in weakness, we can find unexpected sources of strength. So, today, while in the midst of one of my better days, I've hammered out some actionable insights for anyone of you grappling with similar challenges.

Now, I want to get into three key things that I've had to learn the hard way through wearing myself out on failed projects and dead ends. These are celebrating small victories, learning to have a flexible and adaptive routine, and prioritizing self-care.

Celebrate Small Victories

Sure, the spotlight often shines on grand achievements and monumental successes. But, I've come to find a secret joy in celebrating small victories. In fact, I've come to prefer and even delight in the quiet, unnoticed scenes that unfold in the background, far away from the maddening crowd.

On a 'good' day, I may feel able to conquer mountains, but on 'bad' days, climbing out of bed feels like summiting Everest. What I've learned, though, is that days are not 'good' or 'bad' unless we make them so. I used to keep telling myself: "Oh, I'm gonna have a bad day today." That's just never a good way to start. Having a bad energy or focus level — or both — doesn't help when you have something important to do. But, on these days, I have to step back and find small victories wherever I can. Sometimes, it may be simply reading a chapter of a book, and finding just one or two thought-provoking passages to take note of for future pondering. That's where many of my essay—and now newsletter—topics come from, after all.

For me, my favorite thing to read is thought-provoking non-fiction. If a book doesn't gently nudge your perspective in an unexpected way, or phrase something in a clever way, or give me a topic on a silver platter, I put it away and move on.

My fatigue has been a sort of blessing in disguise; I can't waste time on something that doesn't serve me. This is part of why I don't read much fiction; I'd love to find some engaging fiction to whisk me away to another world, but I find that writing my own silly fiction serves that function just fine.

Of course, every day, I somehow manage to write a few paragraphs. I have a Writer's Notebook series that I try to keep up daily. I do miss a day or two here and there, but mostly because I wrote an entire article instead. Even little clusters of words that don't necessarily flow well are at least an attempt to get something started. On my foggiest days, any sentence I craft is a significant victory dance of neurons.

I've had to learn to stop worrying about the quantity of my output, something that was necessary in my freelancing career. Today, I have no reason to not focus entirely on the quality. It's a great feeling to string together thoughts that make sense, like building a bridge over a river of muddled thoughts, one word at a time.

So, I invite you to admire your own small achievements, not as insignificant, but as heroic acts in the narrative of your day. Anything that we accomplish

that's positive and pushes us in the right direction must be recognized as powerful affirmations of our resolve.

Even on my slowest days, I've learned to hold myself accountable to seeing that progress is still made. Whether that's my newsletter, or an article on one of my sites, or getting a bit more organized with my archives — any of these three goals is worthwhile. (My fiction is lumped in with my archive maintenance, because it's lowest priority.)

I invite you to pick two or three projects that you either need or want to get done. Then, every single day, make some progress on at least two of them. Still, sometimes the best victory you'll get in a day is simply taking a deep breath and trying to refresh your mindset.

These are milestones in their own right, especially during times when every ounce of energy is precious. By acknowledging each achievement, you cultivate a positive mindset that can help counterbalance the weight of the tougher days. It makes losing a day to health issues much more tolerable when you know that tomorrow could be a really great day.

Learn to Be Flexible and Don't Mind Breaking Routine

I always believed in the philosophy of working smarter, not harder. Yet, I often found myself working harder than everyone else, but not actually smarter. I'm not sure why this disconnect occurred, but I think it came out of frustration of life just not going my way more often than not. As someone who's absolutely dreadful at knowing how to pace myself, it's incredible I didn't work myself into an early grave.

Oftentimes, my limits day to day are only obvious to me when I get dizzy, in pain, or lash out in anger at flubs that I make in exhaustion or lack of concentration. There are days in which I'm perfectly cogent, and yet, can't move a muscle without feeling like my body is going to fall apart within moments. Other days I'm physically able, but my brain is living in the dense fogs of Mount Everest. There's rarely anything in between.

So, on days when functioning seems next to impossible, it's beneficial to be flexible. This doesn't mean an absence of structure, though. Rather it means adopting a gentle framework that can be adapted based on my energy and mood. The trouble is, I'm also on the autistic spectrum, so if something unexpected happens and interferes with my process, I lose my temper.

In general, my routine is to do most of my heavy writing and editing work in the morning when I first get up. That's when my mental energy is most concentrated. But some mornings I'll be lucky to even write a couple paragraphs in my writer's notebook. I've learned that some mornings I can work for four straight hours. Other days I'm lucky if I find the brainpower to even write a smattering of sentences.

The rest of the day I alternate between light activities I enjoy, such as watching YouTube videos, or reading, or even attempting to make progress on various writing and editing projects. Listening to music or white noise ambient sounds can help, although sometimes I just have to lay down and take a quick nap to recharge my defective batteries.

At times, I can't sleep and actually end up being up late, as if just to "make up" for lost time. I try not to be so hard on myself any more. After all, I'm in a position now where I don't have to work. It's more for my own overactive brain. Flexibility and routine are two seemingly contradictory concepts that, in the world of chronic fatigue, must waltz together with the grace of a clumsy giraffe on ice skates. Managing myself is often like being a tightrope walker juggling flaming torches while reciting Shakespeare.

So, while I've struggled to learn how to manage my energy level most optimally, what I have been improving on most is my adaptability. I may not be fully aligned with my body and mind's needs just yet, but at least I have come to find some way to be productive even on my worst days.

Sometimes, there will just be a 'stare blankly at the wall' kind of day, and yet, even then, I somehow produce something. As long as I keep any sort of positive momentum, I tell myself that tomorrow might just be the day I start to write the 'next great novel.' At the very least, I somehow manage to always have a 'write a paragraph without nodding off' day.

Why You Should Prioritize Self-Care

For me, self-care isn't just a buzzword; it's a survival tactic. On both good and challenging days, I've recognized that self-care is paramount to my well-being. This means engaging in activities that nourish my individuality, such as reading for pleasure, playing games, or simply going outside for a bit to get some Vitamin D. Physical well-being plays a pivotal role in mental health. So, even when good health is fleeting, I know I must take care of myself when I'm not well. That means not overdoing things.

I always ensure I'm eating nutritious meals, even when my cranky digestive system gives me issues. (Yet another side effect of the chemotherapy.) Getting adequate sleep is also sometimes a struggle, since I also suffer from insomnia — ironically, that happens a lot with chronic fatigue. Also, when my energy level is OK, I try to get some exercise. It's usually just pacing around in circles or going out on errands with my wife.

Perhaps the hardest part is managing the physical symptoms. This is especially difficult when I also suffer from mild neuropathy, another side effect of the chemotherapy that saved my life. The winter is especially rough, making it very hard for me to type. I'm fortunate that speech to text software is good enough now that it saves some days I'd otherwise be unable to write.

It's taken me a number of years to get away from being the workaholic I was before getting sick. Building the right type of resilience involves fully accepting my limitations and adapting my expectations. I've had to learn to give myself compassion in my weakest moments. Spiritually, I need to find meaning and purpose in the few good days I have, so that when my body betrays me, at least I'm always progressing towards some goal. For me, that's this daily newsletter.

Before starting these Chronicles of Absurdia, I somehow managed to put out a book of poetry and a book

of essays in 2023. But along the way, I abandoned many other projects because I simply lacked the focus or energy to make real headway on them. So, starting in 2024, I put everything on hold to focus on this newsletter Monday through Friday.

On the weekend, I allow myself to dabble in other things, but only an hour at a time. I've decided to focus on short, productive bursts followed by an extended rest period,. So, when I do have good days, or even good nights, I can take full advantage of the stored up reserve.

No matter what, though, I reserve the late afternoon and evenings for my wife. While my struggle might feel personal and isolating at times, I know I'm never truly alone. Sharing my feelings with her helps me cope with my limitations. From her perspective, as long as I'm able to accomplish anything — like writing this newsletter — it's a valid use of my day.

So, my journey with chronic fatigue is as much about discovering what makes me feel fulfilled as it is about navigating the external world. As long as I can produce at least one meaningful essay or newsletter edition a day, although I always reach for two, I've done something. If I'm not up to writing, but I can outline a few future pieces or at least lay the groundwork for more writing, I'm doing OK.

In the zigzag journey of chronic fatigue, prioritizing self-care is an art, a science, and sometimes, a tragic comedy. You must treat yourself with the same kindness and patience you'd offer to a dear friend.

Small Victory Achieved

Our Daily Challenge is typically chosen with the goal to aim for just 1% improvement in your life. With chronic fatigue, I've had no choice but to completely arm myself with the philosophy that tiny steps can lead to great achievements.

Today, your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to recognize and celebrate one small achievement in your day. No matter how seemingly insignificant, you must take a step back and recognize your #SmallVictoryAchieved.

We often overlook the small wins, the modest triumphs that punctuate our daily lives. So today, we turn our magnifying glasses onto these micro-victories, illuminating their importance in our journey of self-growth.

For example, did you manage to make your bed this morning? That's not just arranging pillows and sheets; it's setting the tone for an organized day. Perhaps you chose to drink an extra glass of water, nourishing

your body one sip at a time. Or maybe, amidst the chaos of a regular day, you found a moment of peace, taking a deep breath and simply being present in that moment.

These actions will never make headlines. They won't be celebrated with parades or fireworks. But, for your own personal growth, they are your medals of honor, your quiet yet powerful assertions of progress.

So, as your day unfolds, keep an eye out for these small but mighty moments. When you spot one, take a minute to acknowledge it. Give yourself a mental high-five, a pat on the back, or even a victory dance – whatever celebrates you best. Even share it on social media with the suggested hashtag. #SmallVictoryAchieved

Today, by recognizing and cherishing one small achievement, you're reinforcing a powerful mindset. Every step, no matter how small, counts on the path to a better, stronger, more resilient you. Let's make today 1% better, one small victory at a time.

Closing Thoughts

As we close today's chapter in these Chronicles of Absurdia, I want to leave you with a final note of encouragement, especially for those of you who, like me, are navigating the challenges that come with "invisible

illnesses" like CFS, Long Covid, or any number of other misunderstood maladies.

To all my fellow travelers on this winding path, know that your struggles, though often unseen, are deeply acknowledged and understood by me. Each day you face may feel like a solitary journey, but you're actually part of an often silent community bound by shared experiences and unspoken understanding.

Invisible illnesses offer a unique personal challenge —the difficulty of being understood and acknowledged in a world that often values what can be seen and measured. But here, this can be our shared space, your struggles are visible and valid. Your pain, your fatigue, your highs, and your lows, are all recognized by the Chronicles of Absurdia community as vital steps in your incredible journey.

I urge you to hold onto the knowledge that your experiences, though daunting, are helping build a strength within you that's as real as any visible feat of endurance. Your daily battles, your small victories, and even your moments of rest, are all acts of courage. So, as you continue your journey, remember to be gentle with yourself. Celebrate your wins, no matter how small. Seek comfort in the knowledge that you are not alone, and your experiences contribute to a broader understanding of what it means to live with an invisible illness.

While my own good days and less-than-good days aren't consistent, I've learned to better recognize the value in every moment. I share my story so that you can learn from my own struggles. It's entirely possible to transform even the toughest days into opportunities for growth and reflection. Life's ebb and flow is part of its terrible beauty, and believe me, you don't want every day to be the same.

In solidarity, I stand with you, acknowledging your challenges and cheering for your triumphs. Keep moving forward, keep finding joy in the small things, and most importantly, keep embracing your unique journey with courage and hope. For the healthier among us, I hope that these tips may even help us all to lead even happier, healthful lives!

Until our next issue, may you find strength in your resilience, joy in your journey, and a community in our shared experiences. Remember, in the Chronicles of Absurdia, every chapter of your story is valued and important.

Take care, and keep writing your extraordinary story,
~ Amelia Desertsong, January 22, 2024

Overcoming Paper Tigers

I'm blessed to share a name with the brilliant trailblazing aviator Amelia Earhart, who was tragically taken from us too soon. She was quite the boss babe, consistently having to overcome chauvinism in her chosen field of aviation. Amelia was also a successful writer in her own right. In her writings, she offered some poignant bits when it comes to motivation. Because of this, Earhart is a major reason why I have focused on motivational topics for many of my essays.

One of my favorite of these Amelia Earhart quotes has to do with tenacity. It's been mentioned plenty over the years in various motivational articles. While this is a good quote as such, people need to read the entirety of it to get its full meaning. Here's how this famous Amelia Earhart quote reads on BrainyQuote:

"The most difficult thing is the decision to act, the rest is merely tenacity. The fears are paper tigers. You can do anything you decide to do. You can act to change and control your life; and the procedure, the process is its own reward."

Most of this quote is straightforward. But, there is one phrase that particularly stands out. What are "paper tigers," you ask? According to Merriam-Webster, the

phrase “paper tiger” refers to something ”that is outwardly powerful or dangerous but inwardly weak or ineffectual.” It’s a literal English translation of the Chinese phrase zhilaohu. It means, being made of paper, it won’t withstand real challenge.

We all have paper tigers that we face in our daily lives. But, we can’t let our fears become monsters which get the best of us. We may even be told that our fears are irrational. So, we strain our brains trying to rationalize them to others. But, what we should be doing instead is think through why these certain fears exist for us.

Attempting to Tame My Own Paper Tigers

I’ve always had a terrible fear of heights. But, as long as you’re safe and don’t put yourself in situations where falling is likely, that fear is a paper tiger, right? Otherwise, that fear of heights could prevent you from doing a lot of things, such as going on a plane flight. My fear of heights is a major reason why I didn’t take a commercial flight until the age of 34. It’s incredibly ironic then that one of my all-time heroes is the most famous aviator of all time!

But, I’ve collected quite a few other paper tigers over time. My fear of heights is far from the worst of my menagerie of paper tigers. Chief among them is the fear that what I do will never be enough. People’s expectations

for me have always been unrealistic, and I've never lived up to what my family or friends expected of me. So, I just want to work at something all of the time, fueled by people constantly calling me lazy because I lacked a traditional job.

But, even trying to fight against these paper tigers, I realize that I'm actually being unproductive because my fears lead me to take unreasonable actions. Yes, it's an entirely reasonable fear that my work won't be consistently productive. It's also entirely reasonable the fear that the words I write won't resonate in the way I wish them to with others. There's even the worry that I will make decisions that will be financially disastrous in the hopes that they will pay off eventually.

These paper tigers held me back for too long because I started taking action for the sake of doing something. I found myself sinking far too much time into unproductive ventures just to keep myself busy. Now, I've always been pretty good about not worrying about the sunk cost of money in projects, as most of my life it was chump change in the grand scheme of things. But the one sunk cost fallacy I continued to give into until well into my thirties was wasting my time. It often takes much too long in life to recognize the worst sunk cost is time, and it took me until about 35 to recognize my failing in that area.

As it turns out, these are the same paper tigers that I know other writers and artists keep staring at day after day. We always have to look busy. We have to say we have a plan in mind. We need to commit skin in the game, even if it's a lost cause. But just because most people give into these fallacies and fall flat, it doesn't mean you have to let those paper tigers freak you out in the same way.

What's the Key to Overcoming Our Paper Tigers?

How did I eventually make the realization that my paper tigers were leading me to make unreasonable choices? The key was that I decided to act more deliberately and carefully. As Amelia said in the same context of the above quote, "You can do anything you decide to do." So, I ask myself, what do I really want to do? Many of our paper tigers emerge from the expectations of others. The trick then becomes to ignore everyone else and focus on what we personally want to get out of life.

Even though my freelance writing work evaporated during the Pandemic of 2020, I continued to pour out all the words as they came. My purpose became not to write for profit or even page views on my website. Rather, I began to write for my own education, reflection, and mental health. While I've certainly wavered and

hesitated for weeks and even months at a time in writing consistently, I've never given up on getting my words out there. That's even after consistently threatening: this will be my last entry. I'm clearly still writing, as you're reading this right now, so I didn't give up.

Yes, my tenacity has often wavered in the face of these paper tigers. Fortunately, I know I can beat them by challenging those fears head-on and blow them away with reasonable decision making and consistent productivity. The process of defeating your fears and taking control of your own life, just as Amelia says, is its own reward.

The first step in overcoming fear is to recognize the real impediments to your success. Once you have your fears set firmly in your sights, you can learn how to overcome them. After all, most fears are simply nothing but paper tigers. As our world grows ever more complicated and nuanced, things have a way of looking bleak and insurmountable at times. But, remember, there is always a way out, even if it's not obvious at first.

So, what do you do the next time those paper tigers are staring you down? Tell yourself that no matter how scary they may seem, making decisive action will always bring them down. Most fears are not only illusions, they're also often fragile and easily conquered with a determined mind.

Taming Your Own Paper Tigers

Alright, dear readers, let's play a game of "Spot the Paper Tiger." What's that one fear that's been lounging around in your psyche, pretending to be the king of the jungle but is actually more akin to a kitten with delusions of grandeur? Is it public speaking, looking silly in yoga class, or perhaps the fear of singing out loud and being mistaken for a distressed walrus?

Next, set a timer for just 15 minutes. Ponder over why this fear exists. Is it because of that one time in third grade when you misspoke and everyone laughed, and you've since vowed never to speak in public again? Or perhaps it's the fear of spiders, cultivated by watching too many sci-fi movies where spiders are, for some reason, always gigantic and have personal vendettas against humans.

Finally, jot down a mini action plan you can take to confront this so-called ferocious feline. It could be as simple as speaking up in a meeting — even if it’s simply to agree with a good point — or maybe going outside and respectfully nodding to a spider. This challenge is all about showing your paper tiger who's boss – and that boss is you, armed with a pen, paper, and a dash of audacity.

The point of this challenge isn't to transform you into a fearless superhero overnight, although that would be impressive). It's to recognize that sometimes, what we fear is not as formidable as it seems, and with a bit of humor and introspection, we can start to take away its power. So, let's tickle those tigers today and see them for what they really are – just paper!

Closing Thoughts

Hopefully, you've gained some courage to face your fears with the grace of a cat walking on a slippery roof. Those often over-dramatic paper tigers, love to parade around in our minds. They may roar the might of a leaf blower, but truly possess the strength of a mouse squeak.

Let's take a leaf out of Amelia Earhart's flight log, and make the decision to act. The rest is just keeping your hiking boots on. Each time we decide to stare down a paper tiger, we're essentially saying, "Look here, you origami menace, I'm onto you." Just like that, these fears start to much less ferocious and more like decorations at a child's birthday party.

As you mosey on through your day, I invite you to engage in a bit of tiger-watching. Peek at those fears. Notice how, when you really look them in the eye, they start to resemble those cartoon tigers, perhaps even wearing a bow tie. Make a decision, any decision, to

challenge them. It could be as monumental as saying 'yes' to a new opportunity or as simple as choosing a different brand of breakfast cereal – just to prove you can.

Remember, the true absurdity of life isn't in the fears themselves. It's in the way we let them set up camp and roast marshmallows in our brains.

Keep flying high and be wary of ferocious felines,
~ Amelia Desertsong, January 24, 2024

Colophon

- "Amelia Earhart - The most difficult thing is the decision..." Brainy Quote. https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/amelia_earhart_120929
- "Paper Tigers." The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paper tiger

Cognitive Gymnastics in a World of Wonders

In these "Chronicles of Absurdia," the peculiarities of existence are not just observed but celebrated. Absurdia is not a distant land found in the pages of a fantastical novel; in fact, it's the world as we know it, steeped in the absurdly stupid and illogical actions that define our society. Every day, in order to cope, we engage in cognitive gymnastics, a mental acrobatics performance, trying to make sense of the nonsensical, to find reason within the unreasonable.

Through this series, we explore the illogical symphonies played out in our daily lives. With a blend of introspection, humor, and wit, we unravel the tapestry of human absurdity that, despite all odds, has not led to our collective downfall. At least, not yet. However, through criticizing this absurd theatre of life, we must find not despair but instead a peculiar form of hope. We must recognize our enduring spirit and capacity to adapt. So, let us embark on this journey through Absurdia, where the only thing more surprising than the absurdity itself is our unyielding resilience in its face.

The Illogical Symphony of Daily Life

In the grand orchestra of Absurdia, each of us plays a part in the illogical symphony that underscores our daily existence. Let's unveil the routine absurdities that, paradoxically, form the bedrock of our societal norms.

For instance, think about the ritual of the morning commute. Legions of individuals simultaneously rush to their destinations, often ending up in a gridlocked dance of frustration. I've written on this subject before, but it's still worth mentioning here for its absurdity. It's a daily parade where the goal is to hurry up and wait, a concept so absurd that it can only be met with a resigned chuckle.

Then, we have corporate speak, an absurd ballet of buzzwords where 'synergizing backward overflow' is uttered with a straight face. During meetings, we nod sagely at these linguistic concoctions, performing mental gymnastics to imbue them with meaning. The absurdity lies not just in the words themselves but in the collective agreement to pretend they signify something profound.

Consider also the curious case of fashion trends. Yesterday's fashion faux pas becomes today's haute couture, and we scramble to adapt, often questioning the logic behind our sartorial somersaults. Yet, there's a

shared delight in this whimsy, a tacit acknowledgment of fashion's playful rebellion against the mundane.

When it comes to tech, the absurd becomes even more pronounced. We carry devices capable of accessing the entirety of human knowledge. Yet, we regularly use them to watch cat videos, argue with strangers, and perform countless ‘gacha’ micro-transactions on mobile games designed to be a form of gambling. Of course, let’s not overlook the social media spectacle, where we curate our lives into highlight reels, often grossly distorting reality to fit a narrative. This digital masquerade, while seemingly trivial on the surface, reflects a deeper absurdity in our quest for validation and connection in a world that often feels disengaged and disjointed.

So, in these and countless other examples, the illogical symphony of daily life plays on, a bizarre yet beautiful cacophony. These contradictions should be delightful, a testament to our ability to find joy and silliness amidst the profound potential of our tools. Yet, they often lead to a socially accepted form of self-destruction. We participate, often subconsciously, in this dance of the absurd, no matter what the cost, choreographed by the unwritten rules and silent agreements that define our society.

Cognitive Gymnastics Unveiled

Now, we delve into the concept of 'cognitive gymnastics,' the mental contortions we perform daily to make sense of the nonsensical. As residents of Absurdia, we're not just passive observers of the world's folly; we're active participants in its most perplexing rituals. Therefore, cognitive gymnastics are the mental flips and twists we execute to align our perception of reality with the illogical happenings around us.

These mental acrobatics become second nature, part of our internal monologue that justifies waiting 30 minutes in line for a coffee we could easily make at home, or the rationale behind buying a smartphone with features we'll never use only because it's the latest model. In the political arena, these mental acrobatics reach Olympic proportions. We find ourselves supporting policies that contradict our interests or beliefs, simply because they're championed by 'our' side. We navigate through partisan narratives, often bending our logic to fit the shape of our allegiance, illustrating the absurdity of tribal loyalty in modern governance.

Social norms provide fertile ground for cognitive gymnastics. Consider small talk, in which actual content often matters less than the act of talking itself. We ask about the weather not because we're meteorologically inclined, but because societal etiquette dictates such

surface-level banter as a form of polite engagement. There's mutual understanding that these interactions are more about social lubrication than information exchange, rather absurd when you break it down.

Culturally, we celebrate holidays and traditions with origins so obscured by time that we seldom question their relevance. We carve pumpkins, hang stockings, or burst crackers, adhering to customs whose meanings have evolved or been lost. Yet, there's comfort in the ritual, a shared sense of belonging that comes from collective participation in these customs. But the great absurdity is the lengths to which we will go to stand out in our participation in such nonsense.

On a personal level, we all have our idiosyncratic rituals that defy logic, yet provide a sense of order and control. From our morning routines set in stone to the superstitions we heed without question, these practices are the individual threads in of Absurdia's grand design.

It's only through humor and introspection that we begin to see the absurd not as a flaw in our world, but as a fascinating feature. It becomes, a source of endless amusement and wonder that underscores these Chronicles of Absurdia. But, while we laugh, we must also take actions to align ourselves with more profound truths, while eschewing the common silliness.

As we uncover the layers of cognitive gymnastics that scaffold our daily lives, we come to recognize these mental acrobatics for the coping mechanisms they really are. Understanding them isn't about undermining our actions or beliefs, but rather appreciating the intricate interplay between logic and absurdity that defines human experience. In these Chronicles, we're not training ourselves to be better gymnasts in this mental arena; we're also studying and marveling at the spectacle of our own intricate rationalizations.

The Art of Sustaining Absurdia

Our complex cognitive gymnastics don’t just contribute to the personal quirks of our daily lives. They also play a crucial role in sustaining the very fabric of Absurdia. Let’s explore how these mental contortions, while seemingly illogical, are essential to the persistence and functionality of our society.

The beating heart of Absurdia's endurance is our collective ability to adapt to and perpetuate its illogicalities. At first, it might appear that these adaptations are a sign of societal decay. But, in fact, on one hand they serve as a testament to human resilience and creativity in the face of the absurd. For instance, consider the economic systems that thrive on consumerism and the creation of desires for unnecessary

goods. The absurdity of spending money we don't have on things we don't need is a driving force of economic growth, illustrating how absurd practices can have rational outcomes.

But, even when we can rationalize certain outcomes, it doesn't necessarily follow that the means to these ends are justifiable. Just because something is rational doesn't mean that it's beneficial to human beings; I would certainly argue we need to overhaul our beliefs about consumerism for example. That being said, in order to interact with our world successfully, we find ourselves making concessions to systems that are often designed to fool our illogical emotionally-motivated brains to make poor choices.

In the social and political spheres, the maintenance of Absurdia becomes even more apparent. The convoluted bureaucracy that often defines government processes can seem like an exercise in futility. Yet, this labyrinthine system still functions as a stabilizing force, however wobbly, preventing sudden rapid, potentially destabilizing changes. The absurdity of red tape and administrative hoops, therefore, serves a purpose, creating a predictable, if cumbersome, structure within

which society operates. It's far from ideal, but it serves its purpose, for now.

Culturally, the arts and media reflect and perpetuate the absurdities of our time. Television shows, movies, and literature often explore themes of absurdity, highlighting the incongruities of life in ways that are both entertaining and thought-provoking. These cultural artifacts not only mirror the absurdity of our existence but also help us come to terms with it, offering a shared space for reflection and discussion. Unfortunately, they often move discussions into the realm of the unreal, which is something these Chronicles warn against. We still have to live in the real world, after all, whether we like it or not.

Moreover, these rituals and traditions that punctuate our lives, from the grandiose to the mundane, lend a sense of continuity and identity. They may be absurd in their construction or execution, but they bind communities and generations, providing a collective narrative and a sense of belonging. The absurdity of these practices, then, is not just tolerated but cherished, as it contributes to the richness of the human experience. I can live with such traditions, as long as they don't lead to self-destructive behavior, which they sadly often do.

The sustainability of Absurdia seems to hinge on our collective embrace of its contradictions and

complexities. By engaging in cognitive gymnastics, however, we not only navigate but also perpetuate the absurdities that define our world. This participation doesn't signify a surrender to illogicality, but rather an acknowledgment of the intricate balance between order and chaos, reason and absurdity, that underpins our existence. But, this doesn't mean that things don't need to change.

In sustaining Absurdia, we reveal the underlying strength of our societal fabric, woven from threads of both absurdity and resilience. I invite you, dear readers, to appreciate the artistry in our collective maintenance of the absurd, recognizing that in the heart of illogicality lies the enduring spirit of humanity. However, just because the human spirit is still, for the most part, alive and well, it doesn't mean we shouldn't try to shift the absurd into a more humanist and justifiable system.

Strategies for Survival in Absurdia

How is it we can not just survive but thrive in Absurdia? These Chronicles exist to offers actionable advice on how to recognize, appreciate, and navigate the absurdity that permeates our lives. Today, we offer strategies for survival in a rationalized, but often unjustified, world of absurd nonsense.

The first step to thriving in Absurdia is to develop an acute sense of observation. Pay attention to the nuances of daily life, the small inconsistencies, and the larger-than-life oddities that often go unnoticed. You become a detective of the mundane, scrutinize the world around you for its quirks and contradictions. This heightened awareness can transform your daily routine into something remarkable, making the ordinary extraordinary.

Next is appreciating the absurd for what it is. Cultivating a sense of humor in doing so. Life's incongruities can be a source of frustration or amusement. So, choosing the latter can transform our experience of the world. Laugh at the bizarre nature of a traffic jam, find humor in the paradoxes of modern technology, and smile at the often anti-social ironies of social media. Embracing the absurd with humor doesn't diminish its complexity but makes it more bearable and, often, more enjoyable.

When it comes to navigating the absurd, mental flexibility is the key to navigating the absurd landscapes of our lives. Our cognitive gymnastics must include being open to the unexpected, adapting to the nonsensical, and finding solutions that defy conventional wisdom. When faced with the illogical, instead of resisting, ask, "How can I adapt to this?" This approach fosters resilience and

innovation, enabling us to maneuver through the absurd with grace and agility.

However, while recognizing and laughing at the absurdities of life, it's important to maintain a balance. Being constantly fixated on the absurd can be overwhelming, leading to cynicism or detachment. (I myself have been there and been that.) Conversely, ignoring the absurdities altogether can result in a life unexamined and potentially unfulfilled. Striking a balance means engaging with the absurd when it adds value and insight to our lives and letting it go when it becomes a source of undue stress.

So, accepting and adapting to the absurd is a way of life as much as it's a survival strategy. I encourage you to look beyond the surface, to find joy in the unexpected, and to appreciate the peculiar beauty of our existence. Through recognizing, appreciating, and navigating the absurd, we not only make sense of the world around us but also enrich our journey through it, one absurd moment at a time.

Closing Thoughts: The Beautiful Chaos of Humanity

Whenever you're feeling stuck in life, remember that the absurdity that pervades our lives serves as a reminder that humanity is not a monolith of logic and

reason, but a vibrant mosaic of contradictions and complexities. The cognitive gymnastics we perform daily, the illogical symphonies we partake in, and the absurd rituals we uphold aren't signs of a society on the brink of collapse but rather evidence of our incredible adaptability and creativity.

In this chaotic musical drama of Absurdia, we can find our most genuine expressions of resilience, innovation, and humor. Our ability to laugh in the face of the illogical, to find common ground in the nonsensical, and to embrace the unpredictable is what sustains us through the trials and tribulations of existence.

But, while it's heartening to watch those around us adapt to a rapidly shifting world, it's also not productive to resign ourselves to a fate of confusion and chaos. Rather, we must actively choose to engage with the world in a way that acknowledges its inherent unpredictability. We must pursue change when it's badly needed, but do so in a way that works in tandem with the human tendency for mental acrobatics.

As a society, we must stop surrendering to letting our coping mechanisms allow us to drift through life. Instead, we must cherish an active celebration of life's myriad mysteries. This is what will allow us to navigate the unpredictable currents of existence with a sense of

wonder and a readiness to laugh at the absurdities that await us around every corner.

Whenever life is getting you down, don't forget your capacity to find humor, meaning, and beauty in the most unlikely places. As we close this chapter, let's carry forward the lessons learned here, wearing our cognitive gymnastics medals with pride. Together, dear readers, we'll step into the future with a crooked smile, ready to face the next absurd adventure that life has in store.

~ Amelia Desertsong

The Dignity of Labor: A Reflection on Apology and Self-Respect in Work

The concept of work is deeply ingrained in the human condition. It's a pivotal aspect of living that shapes our identities and life paths. The work that we engage ourselves in is often synonymous with our survival and sustenance. But for many, it's also a source of pride and fulfillment. However, it seems that in recent times, the necessity of work has been oddly twisted into a near-comical dance of remorse. Why then, you might ask, do people feel compelled to apologize for embracing the grind, for fueling the machinery of life itself?

My feeling going into this exploration is that these apologies are somehow necessitated by societal or self-imposed pressures and judgments we don't yet fully understand. So, I've sought to explore the underlying implications of apologizing for one's labor, the meaning of dignified work, and if there are any instances where self-reproach becomes justified.

So, let's dive headfirst into this rabbit hole of apology and self-respect in work. We must dissect the curious phenomenon where labor, rather than being worn as a badge of honor, is often sheepishly tucked away. What propels this apologetic sentiment? Is there a

hidden dignity in the labor we've failed to acknowledge? Or are we simply tilting at the windmills of our own constructed realities?

As we peel back the layers of societal facades, what will we reveal to be the core of what it truly means to labor? Hopefully, we'll not only uncover the roots of this apologetic tendency, but also help reclaim the inherent pride and fulfillment that labor should rightly command.

The Essence of Dignified Labor

Labor is the backbone of any thriving society, and it comes in many shapes and forms. It represents commitment, discipline, and purpose, all in the pursuit of significant goals. Work also provides an anchor for both individual and societal development. It stands as the backbone of civilization, a well-understood play of give and take that propels societies toward prosperity and individuals toward self-realization.

At its core, dignified labor is a manifestation of one's devotion to personal responsibility to providing and contributing to the task at hand, regardless of the nature of the job. Dignified labor, beyond just about the physical act of working, is a manifestation of one's devotion to personal responsibility. It's an ancient concept embodying the quintessential human journey of contributing to a cause greater than oneself.

This labor, whether it be the sweat of the brow in the fields, the intellectual rigor in the laboratories, the creative whirlwind in the studios, or the service-oriented kindness in the cafes, validates the essence of human contribution. Each droplet of effort adds to the ocean of collective advancement, underscoring the fact that no work is too small or insignificant when performed with pride and purpose.

Yet, somehow in the absurd theater of modern life, the act of labor has been oddly cloaked in a veil of apology. It's as if being industrious were a disservice to others or an inconvenience needing justification. This sentiment is perplexing to me; why should one apologize for the noble act of contributing to the societal fabric? It suggests an underlying discord, a misalignment, between the societal valuation of work and the personal fulfillment it brings. Some great absurdity within our societal hierarchies have created stereotypes that have, over time, skewed our perceptions, elevating certain professions while unjustly diminishing others.

The apologies for engaging in work, then, reflect the warped societal norms that undervalue the dignity of labor. It reveals a deeper conflict within individuals, a struggle with self-worth and the value assigned to their toil. This mismatch between personal reality and societal

expectation creates a chasm, where the true essence of dignified work is often lost in translation.

We must also not ignore the sort of marginalization diminishes the perceived worth of those deemed ‘lesser' by those we come to perceive as “well-to-do” who have bullied their ways into positions of authority. These bullies are the sorts of people who achieve success by stepping all over others on their way up.

Apologizing for working to support oneself and one’s loved ones should never imply a transgression of societal norms or expectations. When the societal gaze compels one to feel guilt or shame for their chosen or necessary mode of labor, it poses fundamental questions about the true essence of dignified work.

We should be celebrating dignified labor as a core of human existence, urging us to strip away the absurd apologies and recognize the value in every form of honest work. We must challenge the stereotypes and societal hierarchies to embrace the dignity inherent in all labor. In this light, our work transcends its physical bounds, becoming a spiritual journey of self-discovery and societal contribution.

When Apologies for Work Become Justifiable

While the act of working generally should not summon the need for apologies, certain situations warrant a reflective mea culpa. Every task, no matter how trivial it may seem, should carry the weight of dignity and the potential for fulfillment. Otherwise, it isn't honest work, and isn't worth doing. After all, not all roles contribute positively to the script of the absurd play being put on around us. So, how do we fall into these sorts of undignified labor?

When our work morphs into a detrimental force, gnawing at our financial stability, emotional well-being, or physical health, such scenarios can warrant reconsideration and, potentially, an apology to oneself and their loved ones. This acknowledgment isn't about the work itself, per se, but about the misalignment of our efforts with our well-being and aspirations. The absurdity lies in persisting with occupations that drain more than they replenish, turning the noble pursuit of labor into a Sisyphean ordeal.

Any work that depletes more resources — monetary or otherwise — than it provides, inevitably becomes a futile endeavor. The worst kind of work is a manifestation of misdirected efforts and time. In such instances, the apology isn't for the act of working itself, but rather for allowing ourselves to be ensnared in a

destructive cycle. Such justifiable apologies spring from recognizing when the path of labor leads away from personal growth and fulfillment, necessitating a pause and introspective reflection.

So, such apologies must serve as a catalyst for transformation, urging a reevaluation of our professional journeys. They must involve taking steps to realign ourselves with pursuits that are not only financially and emotionally rewarding, but also conducive to personal growth and societal contribution. They are not admissions of defeat but rather acknowledgments of missteps on the path to finding work that resonates with our core values.

Being an indispensable part of human existence, labor should inherently be respected and valued. Typically, work should be exempt from apologies born out of societal prejudices or unfounded guilt. Apologizing for work, then, must transcend mere regret; it must then evolve into a mechanism for self-realization and course correction. We must strictly distinguish between dignified labor and detrimental endeavors, in where an apology actually becomes a tool for self-realization and transformation. Sometimes, apologies can become the seeds of change, sprouting new paths toward more meaningful and dignified endeavors in the grand narrative of work.

Strategies to Distinguish Between Dignified Labor and Detrimental Work

The first step in distinguishing dignified from detrimental labor is to gain a keen awareness of the source of these apologies. Are they stemming from external societal pressures and judgments, or are they a result of an internal realization that one's work is not fulfilling or is causing harm? This distinction is crucial, for it separates the needless guilt from necessary introspection.

To effectively maintain the dignity of our labor, we must adopt a mindset that sees work as an extension of personal values and aspirations. Work shouldn't be seen merely as a means to survive or conform to societal expectations. So, we must question the nature of our individual labor: Does it enhance personal growth and contribute positively to society, or does it detract from our well-being and ethical standards, or even of others around us?

Here are five actionable steps to help answer these questions:

1. Reflect on Personal Values and Work Alignment: Evaluate how well your work aligns with your values and goals. If there's a disconnect, consider what

changes could be made to realign your professional path with your personal aspirations.

2. Assess the Overall Impact of Your Work: Look at the broader effects of your labor, both on your own life and on others. If your work is causing more harm than good, it might be time to seek alternatives more harmonious with your well-being and ethical beliefs.

3. Embrace Change: If you find that an apology for your work is indeed justified, you must use it as a stepping stone to initiate change. This might mean transitioning to a different career, seeking further education or training, or simply shifting the way you approach your current work.

4. Foster a Culture of Respect for All Labor: Challenge and change the narrative around work in your sphere of influence by valuing all forms of labor. Encourage open discussions about work satisfaction and advocate for environments where everyone's contributions are respected and appreciated.

5. Practice Self-Compassion and Understanding: Recognize that navigating the world of work is a complex journey filled with trials and errors. It's okay to make mistakes and learn from them.

Navigating the absurdity of labor apologies means striking a balance between societal expectations and personal fulfillment in work. This requires introspection, courage, and a transformation of our mindset. The ultimate goal for each and every one of us should be to find and engage in labor that is both dignified and aligning with our deepest values and aspirations.

Closing Thoughts

As we reflect on what it means for labor to be dignified, my personal voyage through the realms of digital marketing and freelance writing casts a long, contemplative shadow. For twelve years, I toiled in the digital marketing sphere, crafting narratives to showcase products and services. While these offerings were beneficial to some, the work often felt like a perpetual cycle of busywork, a means to fill the hours and justify a paycheck rather than a pursuit of meaningful contributions.

The essence of my labor, though cloaked in the guise of productivity, often seemed to echo the absurdities we've explored here. I found that I often was silently apologizing to myself for not harnessing the full potential of my words and talents. The transition to freelance work brought with it the stark realization of my words being undervalued, not only in the monetary sense

alone, but also in the profound impact they could've had. While offering freedom and variety, freelance work still lacked the deeper sense of purpose and fulfillment I sought.

Driven by a desire to make my words resonate with more than just commercial intent, I finally embarked on a path to imbue them with greater meaning and value. I realized my writing needed to transcend the transactional nature of freelance assignments and digital marketing campaigns, to touch lives, inspire change, and provoke thought.

Since the pandemic of 2020, I pivoted towards crafting motivational and inspirational content. I decided my focus must be on providing timely, actionable advice and reflections stemming directly from my experiences. This shift went beyond changing the nature of my work. It also meant redefining the worth of my words and, by extension, the worth of my labor in the grand scheme of life.

In this absurd yet enlightening journey through the world of work and apologies, I've come to appreciate that the true value of labor lies not in the hours logged or the paycheck received, but in the impact and fulfillment it brings to both ourselves and others. Whether in the guise of digital marketing or the freedom of freelance writing, the quest for meaningful, dignified labor is a journey

fraught with apologies and realizations. For us to truly feel fulfilled, these realizations must lead to a deeper understanding of our own purpose and contributions.

We must embrace the dignity of all forms of honest work. Society and individuals alike should foster environments where labor is respected and valued as a fundamental human endeavor. Reconstructing positive perceptions around work will enable us to have a collective appreciation for the myriad contributions that make up the enterprises of human civilization.

The most absurd thing about labor might just be how long it takes us to realize its true value. So, as I continue to pen my thoughts and experiences, I aim to craft each word with the dignity it deserves. Through these essays, I long to inspire others to find the true essence of their own labor. It's past due time we push to empower individuals to pursue their paths without the looming shadow of unwarranted apologies.

~ Amelia Desertsong

Kids Actually Do Have It Tough These Days

As I combed the depths of YouTube for my usual fix of Star Trek lore, I stumbled upon a content creator whose insights into politics and society often resonated with my own, albeit from a more left-wing stance. Being a self-proclaimed centrist, I still was able to find common ground in his critique of the timeless tradition where every generation laments the follies of the next. It was a comedic, yet sorrowful realization that we often chant the refrain “back in my day” as if the past was a utopia, blissfully ignoring its own brand of chaos.

This creator’s comments led me to ponder the absurdity of the unwarranted harshness we direct at the younger generation. Today, I aim to dissect this absurdity with a mix of introspection, humor, and perhaps a dash of cynicism, to unveil the peculiar challenges faced by today's youth. Let's explore how recognizing and appreciating the absurdity in our generational discourse might just offer us a path to understanding and empathy.

The Absurd Modern Challenges for Youth

Reflecting on the challenges faced by today’s younger generations, I can't help but be struck by the sheer absurdity of the pressures they endure. The advent of social media has ushered in an era where the line

between reality and fabrication blurs. This obsession of an always-online world has created an environment where teenagers are expected to curate their lives as if they were museum exhibits, always ready for public viewing.

This pressure cooker of social media, combined with the relentless beast of cancel culture, crafts a bizarre reality where a single misstep can lead to social exile. This worldview is rife with contradictions: young people are urged to stand out, yet punished when they stray too far from the norm. This creates an environment of conformity and falseness, where the unique quirks that make each person individual are often squashed under the weight of collective judgment.

Adding to this, the unrealistic expectations set by society, education systems, and even the job market make the quest for success seem like a cruel joke. The narrative that success is a linear path paved with prestigious degrees, viral social media fame, and corporate accolades ignores the richness of human experience and the value of diverse achievements.

The absurdity of these modern challenges facing our youth reaches its peak when considering the neuroscientific perspective. Somewhat coincidentally, at the same time I saw this other video, my wife happened to be watching a documentary on Curiosity Stream about

teenagers in today's world. The gist of that documentary was the crazy emphasis on documenting your entire life. In that production, neuroscientists were discussing the effect of constant hyper-stimulation on the teenage brain could well be setting back our evolution thousands of years.

Suggesting that the constant hyper-stimulation from digital devices might be rewinding the evolutionary clock is a claim that sounds as if it were plucked from a dystopian novel. Yet, beneath this seemingly hyperbolic assertion lies a kernel of truth about the unnatural pace of modern life and its impact on mental health, particularly for the neurodivergent among us. In this surreal landscape, where every moment is documented and every action scrutinized, the youth of today are forced to perform in a never-ending circus, juggling the expectations of an audience they can never fully please. These modern challenges are quite intense, and yet, they are often invisible, insidious, and intertwined with the very tools that promise connection and opportunity.

So, these absurd modern challenges for today's youth are rife with contradictions and complexities, forcing the youth to cope with a world that demands conformity while praising superficial individuality. It's a world that offers boundless information yet starves for genuine wisdom. Thus, the first step in navigating

Absurdia, especially for those just starting their journey, it's imperative that come to understand these paradoxes for what they are.

The Paradox of Progress and Its Impact

Now, we delve into the paradox of progress and its bewildering impact on society, particularly to our youth. It lies in the beating heart of modern civilization, where technological advancements promise to simplify life but often complicate it in unexpected ways. I've observed this duality firsthand, marveling at the rapid pace of innovation while lamenting the unforeseen consequences it brings.

This paradox of progress is epitomized in the digital revolution — a realm where information is abundant yet attention is scarce, where connectivity spans the globe yet genuine connections feel increasingly rare. This era has transformed the way we live, work, and interact, offering unparalleled access to knowledge and resources. Yet, it's also ushered in a new set of challenges, particularly for the youth, who navigate a digital landscape that their predecessors could scarcely imagine.

The impact of this progress isn't just technological, but also deeply social and psychological. Today's youth are growing up in a world where their every move can be

tracked, recorded, and scrutinized. The digital footprint begins before they can walk, creating a digital persona that often precedes and influences their real-life identity. This relentless visibility and the pressure to maintain a curated online presence is a source of stress and anxiety for many. This contributes to a sense of living in a fishbowl, constantly observed and judged.

Further, the pace of technological change has led to a societal expectation of constant adaptation and rapid learning. This places additional pressure on young individuals to stay ahead in a seemingly never-ending race. Such a rapid pace can lead to feelings of displacement, where the very tools that are supposed to aid progress become sources of alienation and overwhelm.

Unfortunately, the paradox of progress also manifests in the realm of education and employment. The skills taught today may become obsolete tomorrow, challenging the traditional notion of a stable career path. While constantly offering new opportunities, this fluidity also breeds uncertainty, making it difficult for young people to plan for the future or feel secure in their chosen paths.

Seeing what kids go through today, I know that I literally couldn't be a teenager in today's world without never leaving my room. Especially being neurodivergent

myself, this level of overstimulation would be a death knell; my brain simply stalls if I get overwhelmed. There's no way I'd make it out of young adulthood as a functional individual if I'd had to grow up in today's TikTok short-driven world. Things simply move too fast and people become irrelevant from moment to moment, or worse, canceled for no good reason.

There are other serious implications to hyper connectivity. If you aren't popular on social media, or worse get booted off of it out of pressure or some other means, it's like you don't even exist. Even your career prospects suffer, as employers seemingly want employees who are popular on social media. They want to know everything about you before they even interview you; so, if you don't have a substantial social media presence, you may not even get a call back.

It's as if there are no secrets that can be kept in today's world. As a child of the 90's, it's really sickening for me to watch this go down, considering how often we warned about "Big Brother" and the idea that one day we'd all become walking advertisements for corporate shilling. That's pretty much exactly what's happened.

Kids today may enjoy numerous modern conveniences, but the price they pay for them is heavy. Unless, of course, they don't listen to their teachers and business people who just want to take advantage of them.

What kids should be doing instead is focusing themselves on learning all they can, identifying their best skills, and developing their skill sets in the most efficient and productive way possible. This is what we did back in the 80's and 90's. But, now, kids are just part of a numbers game; they aren't seen as individuals, just as pawns in a three-dimensional chess game in which they are easily and thoughtlessly sacrificed to a "greater cause," whatever that might be.

So, we must recognize that the paradox of progress isn't just a matter of technological advancement, but also a reflection of the complex interplay between human aspirations, societal expectations, and the unanticipated consequences of innovation. As we ponder the impact of this paradox, it becomes clear that the challenges faced by today's youth aren't just obstacles to be overcome. They're also mirrors reflecting the absurdities inherent in our collective pursuit of progress.

Closing Thoughts

Through this exploration of societal pressures on the youth of our times, we reach a crucial juncture where encouragement meets action, urging us to reject the absurdity of current societal norms in favor of a more authentic and fulfilling path. We must fully recognize the complexities faced by today's youth, encouraging a

collective effort to redefine success and value in our society, no matter our own age.

The absurdity of societal norms often lies in their superficiality and in the unrealistic standards they set, leading to a culture of comparison and discontent. These "norms" can make us lose sight of what truly matters — our inherent worth, unique strengths, and the potential to lead meaningful lives that contribute positively to the world around us. To reject these norms is to challenge the status quo, to question the narratives we've been sold, and to courageously craft a life that aligns with deeper, more personal values.

Encouragement should come in the form of internal validation — acknowledging that the challenges faced by today's youth are real, significant, and deserving of attention. It's about offering support and understanding, rather than judgment or dismissal. By recognizing the unique pressures and dilemmas encountered by younger generations, we can begin to foster empathy and solidarity across age groups, bridging the gap that societal absurdities often widen. External validation is welcome, but it shouldn't be the driving force in our lives.

To foster a more authentic path for ourselves and the youth that follow us, we must cultivate environments where everyone feels safe to explore their identities,

express their thoughts, and develop their talents without fear of undue criticism or failure. This means valuing diversity in thought and experience, promoting inclusivity, and encouraging constructive dialogue that leads to mutual growth and learning.

Redefining success and value in society involves shifting the focus from external achievements to internal fulfillment and societal contribution. Success should not be measured solely by material wealth, social status, or popularity, but also by the impact one has on improving the lives of others and the integrity with which one navigates life's challenges. Value should be placed on qualities like kindness, resilience, creativity, and community engagement, recognizing that these are the building blocks of a healthy, vibrant society.

The good news is, no matter how young or old you are, you can break this cycle. Ask yourself right now, what are you best at in this world? How can you do that thing better than anyone around you? Then, ask yourself, are you willing to put the time, blood, sweat, and tears into building something that will provide something useful to humanity? It could be as basic as selling bottled water, driving a truck, or taking pictures of local sporting events.

If you're really good at something, and there's either an existing demand or a potential demand for that

product or service you can offer, start today to work towards filling that need. Trust me, most people will hate you for upsetting the status quo. You just have to live with that. Many more people will thank you for not being a jerk and being a decent human being, while also delivering an excellent product or service.

So, in closing, I call you, my dear readers, to positive action: live authentically, appreciate the multifaceted nature of success, and contribute positively to the world. Create a legacy not of wealth and accolades, but of meaningful change and personal fulfillment. Only then can we pave the way for a future where every individual can thrive, unencumbered by the outdated and unrealistic expectations of a bygone era. Together, we can not only uplift today's youth, but also heal the generational divides, stitching together a societal fabric enriched with diversity, understanding, and genuine accomplishment.

~ Amelia Desertsong

What Can We Learn From George Lucas About Creativity

"You have to find something that you love enough to be able to take risks, jump over the hurdles and break through the brick walls that are always going to be placed in front of you." - George Lucas

In these "Chronicles of Absurdia," I'm all about finding ways to create inspiring stories. Well, why look any further than Star Wars? Sure, plenty of bad things are happening with the Star Wars franchise over the past few years. For example, don't get me started about that Ahsoka series travesty. Yet, you can't argue that it continues to be one of the most successful science fiction franchises of all time.

Of course, none of it would've been possible without George Lucas. For as much negative criticism as Lucas gets, I'm fully convinced that he is actually underrated as a filmmaker. Of course, no one doubts his skill with the camera. No one discredits him for his love of innovating filmmaking technology. But, what people really do is call him a "bad" writer and a "derivative" storyteller.

Actually, I don't think he's either of these things. While he certainly has shortcomings like anyone else, I believe these are oversimplifications of a much more

nuanced truth about Lucas's creative skillset. Every writer derives elements from somewhere. Lucas may need help with his screenwriting, but so do plenty of other good writers!

This topic was inspired by an excellent documentary series, actually three, from Chuck of SF Debris on YouTube. They're about George Lucas and the creation of the original Star Wars, the creation of Empire Strikes Back and Return of the Jedi, and the prequel trilogies. I definitely suggest checking them out. However, I had a lot to say in addition to what Chuck had to say in his videos. If you're not a Star Wars fan, I hope to at least make you a fan of what Lucas was able to do with the franchise by the end of today's letter.

And, yes, before anyone asks, George Lucas does regret selling Star Wars, even for $4 billion.

Appreciating George Lucas, The Maverick

In a galaxy far, far away, or rather, in a studio in sunny California, a man with a wild dream and an even wilder hairdo decided to change the course of cinematic history. This man, George Lucas, might just be the poster child for the phrase "expect the unexpected."

Let's imagine that it's the 1970s — bell-bottoms are in, and so is skepticism. Along comes Lucas who pitches a

space opera film. You can almost hear the studio execs muttering, "Space opera? What's next, a musical about accounting?" (Actually, why hasn't that been done yet?) But Lucas, undeterred by the multitude of raised eyebrows, marches on with his plans.

Then, there's the casting. Lucas, in a stroke of genius or absurdity, casts relatively unknown actors. Who needs established stars when you can have a carpenter-turned-smuggler and a British stage actor voicing a heavy-breathing villain in a black helmet? It's like casting your uncle and the neighbor's kid in a home movie, but somehow, it works spectacularly. (Pretty sure that has been done.)

Yet soon, he introduces us to a universe where lightsabers are a thing with one of the most unexpected blockbuster films in history. Suddenly, every kid in the playground is swinging imaginary glowing swords. Childhoods are transformed! In 2024, Star Wars is the fourth-highest grossing media franchise of all-time. The top three? Third is Winnie the Pooh (yeah, that was actually shocking), Mickey Mouse and Friends (it's had lots of time to accumulate its fortune), and one of my all-time favorites, Pokemon.

Now, let's fast forward to the Empire striking back and Jedi returning, Lucas has us all hooked. We've bought the toys, the lunchboxes, heck, even the curtains. (Yes,

you can still find Star Wars curtains on Amazon in 2024!) Then, in a twist no one saw coming, Lucas goes into hiding for years, working behind the scenes on something big.

As the digital era dawned in the late 1990's, Lucas decided that was finally time to upgrade the original trilogy. Some say he got a tad overzealous with the CGI. Like, did the dewbacks in the original need an upgrade? However, his push for digital filmmaking was visionary, even if it meant that some of the original trilogy's charm got lost in translation.

But, that was just the proof of concept for something much grander. Soon, Lucas introduces us to the prequels. Enter Jar Jar Binks, the character we all love to hate. Was Lucas pioneering a new form of intergalactic comedy, or was this a slip in the cosmic plan? The debates rage on in fan forums to this day.

Even with the prequel trilogy being a critical disaster in many ways, it was still a massive commercial success. It would spawn one of the most beloved and acclaimed animated series of all time in Clone Wars. The prequel trilogy also helped to bring digital filmmaking into the mainstream by taking a lot of risks. Sure, since Lucas sold the franchise to Disney, Star Wars has been on a wild ride ever since. Some of it good, some of it bad. But you can never argue that we wouldn't have this

powerhouse of an intellectual property today without Lucas' power of imagination and the sheer will to bring the absurd to life.

From a farm boy with big dreams to a green puppet dispensing wisdom, Lucas's universe is as vast as it is quirky. It's a place where you can have serious discussions about the political structure of the Galactic Senate one moment, then switch to debating the aerodynamics of a flying R2-D2 the next. Through all the ups, downs, and Jar Jars, Lucas taught us an invaluable lesson: somehow the greatest creative works have just the right mix of the sublime, the serious, and the downright silly. Perhaps that's the secret sauce to creating something truly timeless.

Lucas as an Underestimated Filmmaker and Storyteller

Thanks to the unmitigated success of his space opera, George Lucas is now sitting comfortably with his billions, probably with a smirk, as he watches us all grapple with his legacy. Many folks, myself included, believe that Disney's squeezing of his beloved universe for every penny is actually tarnishing his achievements. There's a lot to be learned from his efforts, lessons that will remain quite valuable for all time.

So, let's talk about his filmmaking style. Lucas is like that one friend who throws everything into a blender to see what happens. "What if we mix samurai movies, westerns, and science fiction?" he pondered. That is pretty much what he did, and the result was a cinematic smoothie called Star Wars that had people lining up around the block.

Sure, the texture was a bit unfamiliar, and not everyone was a fan of the aftertaste. Many people weren't thrilled with the Ewoks. (But, keep in mind they were supposed to be Wookiees.) But, you can't deny the innovations he introduced with that original trilogy.

One of the greatest takeaways from the SF Debris documentary series is how Lucas approaches filmmaking. It might surprise you to learn that Lucas decided that the best way to craft epic space fiction was with a documentary-style approach. You might think this sounds like deciding to paint a masterpiece with a toothbrush –- unconventional and slightly bizarre — but undeniably Lucas is never conventional.

For Lucas, fiction isn't just a flight of fancy; it's like an anthropological study on steroids. Like any documentary film maker, Lucas creates as much material as possible for his fiction. Then, he edits, molds, and crafts narratives by remixing and cutting down the raw material. Watch the stormtroopers march with the

precision of a nature documentary's migrating wildebeests, or the how the cantina in Mos Eisley is shot as if David Attenborough might pop out at any moment to comment on the social dynamics of various interspecies interactions. Lucas's style brings a sense of realism to the unreal; it's the method to the madness of a galaxy far, far away making any sense to the average movie-goer.

Then there's the topic of his writing. George Lucas has even been called a bad writer by some critics. Lucas himself has admitted that writing isn't his strong suit. He's also admitted that he had help with writing dialogue as far back as the first film. Yet, Lucas's dialogue can still sometimes feel like it was written by a protocol droid.

Still, while often ridiculed for its woodenness, Lucas' writing can be considered an unsung hero of modern cinema. Lines like, "It's over, Anakin! I have the high ground," have the dramatic flair of a soap opera, yet they stick with you. Who else could come up with lines like, "I find your lack of faith disturbing," and make it sound cool, not just once, but for generations? (Actually, he probably had help with that one.) It's storytelling with the subtlety of a sledgehammer. But, it's our sledgehammer, and we love it.

Lucas's approach to storytelling is like a child playing with action figures (or like Dark Helmet from Spaceballs playing with dolls), mashing different worlds

together with a fearless sense of wonder. It's this childlike imagination that birthed the likes of Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker, characters soon etched into the very fabric of pop culture. Some call it derivative storytelling; I call it the art of blending the familiar with a twist of Lucas magic.

Essentially, George Lucas is much like the guy who brought a kazoo to a symphony and ended up conducting the whole orchestra. After all, the most groundbreaking artists are often those who are most misunderstood in their time. Heck, he's still misunderstood decades later. Lucas is more than a filmmaker; he's a genre-defining, boundary-pushing, universe-creating maverick. And, for every critic who dubs him a "bad" writer, there's a legion of fans who find his unique blend of storytelling as comforting and familiar as their favorite blanket.

To me, Lucas is still an underestimated, underappreciated filmmaker whose boldness and ingenuity have carved out a permanent corner in the halls of cinematic history. In a world that often favors the conventional, Lucas danced to the beat of his own intergalactic drum, and we're all better off for it. The force of his creative spirit continues to be with us, inspiring generations of storytellers, dreamers, and yes, even the critics to complain endlessly.

George Lucas's Digital Dreams

In the early 2000s, when most filmmakers clung to their film reels like life rafts, Lucas was already paddling away on a digital surfboard. His adoption of digital cameras was a quantum jump into the unknown. Critics cried foul, purists sobbed into their celluloid,. Still, Lucas in his typical fashion was already orbiting a different moon. In fact, he was putting a lot of his own money into the technology behind the scenes, and today's filmmakers are reaping the rewards.

This is a man who looked at the state-of-the-art technology of the time and said, "Nah, let's do it my way." His push into digital filmmaking in the late 90's and early 2000's was like deciding to jump into the deep end of the pool without checking if there was water first. Yet, he not only swam, but also set new standards.

In the third documentary series from SF Debris, "The Hermit's Journey," Chuck talks at length about how dedicated Lucas was about digital cameras in film-making. Digital media is much easier to preserve, it's much easier to add in visual effects, and editing is ridiculously easy. While the technology wasn't quite up to par with traditional film back in the early 2000's, Lucas would be inevitably proven correct about the benefits of digital videography.

Sure, the quality of the finished product with films like Attack of the Clones was lesser compared to the traditional cameras of the time. But for all of that movie's faults, Lucas proved that digital film making was definitely a worthwhile venture. As the technology has caught up with Lucas' vision, now pretty much every movie is made with digital cameras.

This shift to digital was like swapping a paintbrush for a graphics tablet. Sure, there was a learning curve. Even at the time, there were mixed feelings about the CGI in "Attack of the Clones" They certainly haven't aged well, either. Yet, Lucas's digital push was a prophecy of the cinematic future. In a way, he was the Nostradamus of filmmaking. He saw the potential of high-definition digital artistry when everyone else was still fussing over their old grainy classic films.

Lucas's foresight in digital filmmaking was less about jumping on a bandwagon and more about building the wagon, the horse, and even the road. He wasn't just thinking outside the box; he was off on another planet constructing a whole new box. The digital landscape of today's cinema, with its crystal-clear images and mind-bending effects, is the garden that Lucas planted. He even watered and tended to it, all while the rest of us were still trying to figure out the sprinkler system.

George Lucas's documentary-style storytelling and his early embrace of digital technology were revolutionary acts. More than just make some discussion-worthy films, Lucas reimagined what movies could be, and that was always his goal. His imagination was always greater than the technology at his disposal. The sad truth is, the technology now exists, and frankly, I think it's in the wrong hands.

Let's always remember Lucas as that vibrant, slightly eccentric thread that refuses to blend in, adding depth, contrast, and a touch of the extraordinary. As we stand in the digital dreamscapes of modern cinema, it's hard not to tip our hats to the visionary who saw it all coming, from a documentary point of view.

What Can We Learn From Lucas?

Instead of playing by the rules of the entertainment industry, Lucas rewrote them in a language that's part space opera, part technological wizardry. So, what can we learn from his example? Perhaps, the greatest lesson we can pull from Lucas's playbook is to make the best film you can while pushing the current technology to its limits. Let's face it, if Lucas waited for perfection, we might still be waiting for "Star Wars".

Lucas's films, much like a homemade sweater, are endearing not in spite of, but because of their flaws. That's a major reason why he remade the original trilogy; they weren't quite right in his eyes and he had the chance to fix them. I'd also argue that he created that updated trilogy as proof-of-concept for the prequels; he succeeded and brought the magic to a new generation — that being my own.

Lucas didn't just push the envelope with pioneering new technologies. He looked at traditional film techniques and said, "Hold my blue milk." From CGI to digital cameras, Lucas was the guy showing up with a laser gun to a sword fight, changing the game entirely. He made filmmakers realize they could be more than mere storytellers. They could be wizards, capable of conjuring up entire worlds with the flick of a digital wand.

More generally, Lucas taught us that it's okay to dream in galaxies far, far away. In a world often shackled by realism, he gave us permission to leap into hyperdrive, to explore universes beyond our wildest imaginations. He showed us that the sky's not the limit; it's just the starting point. Learning from Lucas is like taking a masterclass in thinking outside the box, then setting the box on fire and launching it into space. He's the maestro of the unconventional, turning what ifs into why nots, and in the process, reshaping the creative industry.

Lucas's impact on the creative industry is like dropping a pebble in a pond and watching the ripples turn into a tsunami. He birthed a cultural phenomenon that will forever inspire filmmakers, game developers, authors, and even theme park designers. There's a bit of Lucas in every corner of the creative world—a legacy of boundless imagination and fearless innovation.

Just like in Star Wars, there's always room for both the futuristic and the timeless, coexisting in a beautiful, chaotic harmony. With in this ever-evolving dichotomy between digital and traditional media, perhaps we can all take a page from George Lucas' book: embrace the new, respect the old, and never stop experimenting. After all, every pixel, every note, and every word is a step in this endless, exhilarating dance of creation.

The digital media revolution, much like the Force, has a light and a dark side. It has given us the power to reach millions with a few keystrokes, but has also made us miss the tactile joy of a physical book or the hiss of a vinyl record. Yet, in this vast universe of media, there's a unifying thread — our endless pursuit of storytelling, of connection, of art. Whether through a screen or on a stage, the story goes on, and like intrepid Jedis of creativity, we must venture forth undaunted into this ever-expanding galaxy of possibilities.

Channeling Your Inner Lucas

Today, dear readers, I challenge you to channel your inner George Lucas. It's time to embrace the quirky, the unconventional, and the absurd! Let's turn the mundane into the extraordinary, one offbeat idea at a time.

First up, let's tackle those daily tasks with a Lucas-style twist. For breakfast, forget the usual cereal or toast. How about blue milk pancakes (yes, those exist and can even be dairy-free!) with a side of Wookiee waffles?

Now, let's move to your hobbies. Do you like gardening? How about planting a garden that defies all traditional rules: a chaotic, yet strangely harmonious mix of colors, shapes, and species, like an alien landscape from a galaxy far away.

If painting is your thing, swap your brush for something absurd - a spatula, perhaps? Channel the spirit of Lucas: the man who thought lightsabers and space battles were good ideas for a film in the 70s. (Turns out they were, but no one knew that at the time!)

Alternatively, why not integrate a digital element into a traditional task, a nod to Lucas' penchant for blending old and new? While reading a book, why not create a soundtrack for it? After all, Lucas has always made sure that the soundtrack for his films tell the story

as much as what you see on screen. Every time you turn the page to a new chapter, play a piece of music that sets the mood.

Or, if you're like me and way too into writing, ditch the keyboard for voice-to-text software. But, rather than speak normally, pretend you are narrating your life events in the grandiose style of a Jedi or a Sith Lord. Your shopping list or daily journal might just turn into an epic saga of memoirs.

However you choose to do it, the essence of this challenge is to find joy in the absurd. Break free from the chains of convention, and see the world through a lens tinted with creativity and whimsy. Today, let every task be an adventure, every routine a story, and every moment a scene from the epic movie of your life.

Who knows? By embracing your absurd side to #ChannelYourInnerLucas, you might just stumble upon your own version of a galaxy far, far away. May the force of creativity be with you!

Closing Thoughts

Lucas's saga wasn't just a series of films; it was a kaleidoscope of the bizarre and the brilliant. He showed us that sometimes the most absurd ideas are the ones that leave the deepest footprint. Embracing our unique

vision, no matter how outlandish it may seem, is essentially like building a spaceship in your backyard. Sure, the neighbors might complain, but you're on your way to the stars. Lucas taught us that the line between madness and genius is often a simple matter of perspective and maybe a dash of good CGI.

Let's not forget, this man turned a concept as ridiculous as a space opera into a cultural touchstone. If that's not a testament to the power of creative absurdity, I don't know what is. Lucas looked not at the world just as it is, but as it could be, with a few extra aliens and a couple of lightsabers thrown in for good measure.

In the end, the beauty of creative absurdity lies in its fearless defiance of the norm. Whether you're a filmmaker, a writer, a painter, or just someone who dreams in vibrant hues of the impossible, remember that this mad world needs your unique brand of crazy.

Think about it—if Lucas had second-guessed his vision, we'd live in a world without Darth Vader, without Yoda's wisdom (or his syntax), and without the iconic sound of a humming lightsaber. What a dull universe that would be! So, as we step out of the shadow of the Death Star and into the light of our everyday lives, let's carry with us the spirit of creative absurdity.

Let's not be afraid to imagine, to explore, and to create, no matter how outlandish the idea. After all, every great innovation, every work of art, and every leap in human thought began as a spark of absurdity in someone else's mind.

So, as we play our part in the symphony of life, don't be afraid to play the kazoo. The beauty of creative absurdity is that it opens our world into a realm of endless possibilities. Every one of us has the potential to be a maverick, crafting our stories in bold, unconventional strokes.

May the creative force of imagination be with us, always.
~ Amelia Desertsong, January 25th, 2024

Colophon

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Mapping the Unconscious Mind

Constantly, I wonder about where my motivations for writing truly emerge. Many times I reach a crossroads about my writing intentions, especially when I find myself dealing with thoughts which are difficult to express or articulate. At these junctures, I'm overwhelmed by a bevy of complex emotions, which further complicates my ability to convey my meaning. I often grapple with profound questions which plague me with a sense of inadequacy; these inquiries will leave me feeling unqualified to expand on them with any real degree of coherence.

In today's edition of the Chronicles of Absurdia, we delve into these shadowy corridors of our minds which serve as the playground of the absurd — also known as the unconscious mind. My own journey through the act of writing often becomes a quest not just for self-expression, but a mission to better understand the labyrinthine paths of my own motivations and thoughts. Fraught with the perplexity of difficult thoughts that resist the light of clear articulation, this exploration is likely going to be a dance with the blatantly absurd.

So, dear readers, we now embark on a voyage to map the unconscious mind, a terrain as bizarre as it's fascinating. As we navigate through the murky waters of

our innermost thoughts, we'll learn about recognizing, with humor and wit, the absurdity inherent in trying to understand a part of ourselves that defies rational explanation. It's in the midst of this delightful chaos that we find the essence of our creative and introspective selves, constantly questioning, ever curious, and always teetering on the brink of the next bewildering discovery.

Why I Often Retreat to Comfort Zones When Writing

Often, when faced with the daunting task of articulating complex, nebulous thoughts, I find myself retreating to the familiar and comfortable ground of innocuous subjects. Writing about the trivialities of daily life, from the simple joys of trading card games to the local sports teams, provides a safe haven. The stakes are low and the emotional investment is manageable, allowing me to evade the more profound, unsettling reflections that lurk in the depths of my mind.

This retreat is more than a mere preference for light-hearted topics, though; it's a manifestation of a deeper reluctance to probe my deeper thoughts, to disturb the settled dust of my understanding. I often experience an almost palpable fear that delving into the complex web of my unconscious might unravel the very fabric of my perceived sanity. The thought of shaking the

foundations of my mental construct seems perilous, a risk fraught with the potential for unsettling discoveries that could challenge my entire worldview.

Yet, amidst these habitual retreats, there are moments of unexpected courage where curiosity triumphs over fear. It's in these rare instances of sporadic bravery that I dare to confront my unconscious mind. These are the moments when my writing transcends its ordinary function, becoming a daring quest to map the uncharted territories of my inner self. In these ventures, I face not just the roots of my fears and hesitations, but also the thrilling possibility of discovering unexplored facets of my psyche. While such a journey is quite terrifying, it's also irresistibly compelling.

The Unconscious Mind and Creativity

So, what is the purpose to mapping the unconscious mind? Well, there exists a peculiar tendency within me to label and categorize thoughts before fully understanding their essence. This may seem an uncommon idiosyncrasy of mine, a quirk of my creative process. But, in fact, this impulse isn't unique to me, but is a common trait among creatives. It's as if by naming the unknown, we attempt to tame it, to bring it into the

realm of the known and manageable, despite its inherently elusive nature.

This act of naming, often seen as a preliminary step in the process of comprehension, paradoxically occurs even when the thought remains a shadow, an enigma. While it's true that naming something typically requires at least a bit of forethought, on occasion my intuition will take over and slap a label onto some esoteric, obscure idea without much justification or explanation.

The act of bringing difficult, unconscious thoughts into the light through naming illustrates a fascinating paradox of creativity: the attempt to define the indefinable. But when working creatively, naming becomes more than an act of identification; it becomes part of the act of creation itself. While absurd in its attempt to concretize the fluid and mysterious, this process is also a testament to the power of creativity to navigate the labyrinth of the unconscious mind. By engaging with the unknown in this way, we not only explore the depths of our own minds but also participate in the shared human endeavor to make sense of the world's inherent absurdity.

The Intersection of Poetry and the Unconscious

In my writing career, I've often turned to poetry as a medium to articulate the unarticulated. My engagement with poetry often serves as a bridge between the conscious and the unconscious realms of my mind. In this creative space, I grapple with difficult thoughts, cloaking them in metaphor and verse. My poems frequently arise from the depths of my unconscious, inspired by its cryptic whispers that linger after sleep.

These difficult thoughts, tangled and elusive, find their expression through the rhythm and imagery of verse, allowing me to map the contours of my inner landscape. Poetry becomes a sanctuary where the unspeakable is spoken, where the intangible is given form. The complexities of the unconscious mind are laid bare in lines and stanzas, albeit with widely varying degrees of accuracy.

There's a definite therapeutic aspect of exploring unconscious thoughts through verse. It's a great way to confront and unravel the knots of confusion and angst that often reside within our unconscious depths. By externalizing these thoughts, poetry acts as a mirror, reflecting the hidden corners of my psyche and facilitating a deeper understanding of my emotions and motivations.

In this reflective process, poetry becomes a tool for self-discovery and healing, allowing me to navigate the tumultuous waters of my unconscious with the steadying hand of verse. Yet, readers seem to enjoy the fruits of these exercises, even if they mostly exist just for my own contemplation and practice in verse. My journey through the realms of poetry has often been an intimate dialogue with the self, a means to voice the voiceless within me. But while this poetic journey is deeply personal, it seems that those works that touch on universal themes are also useful to others, which is an unintended benefit.

Still, there is a certain hard-to-describe tension between such public appreciation and personal introspection. Though gratifying, public appreciation for my poetry is secondary to the profound personal insights gained through this process. This tension between the external reception and the internal quest highlights the dual nature of poetry as both a form of communication and a means of self-exploration. Through poetry, I delicately engage in unveiling my inner world to others, while simultaneously delving into it for my own understanding.

Taking a Practical Approach to Managing Difficult Thoughts

Unfortunately, in recent years, my poetic skills have faded into disuse. Verses don't come to me like they did in my younger years. It seems now that I must be content to more explicit with the expression of these thoughts through the art of essay. However, I do still muse on characters, concepts, and settings my brain will conjure up while I'm sleeping. I just take notes in my commonplace book now and move on.

As my poetry simply became unintelligible in recent years, I decided I needed a much more practical approach to managing difficult thoughts. Where I once sought to bridge vast creative gaps with novels, with the whimsical imagination borne from childhood wonders and dreams, I now dabble in short-form fiction. But, in order to deal with the difficult thoughts that require more immediate attention, I turned to these Chronicles and their various off-shoots, hoping to help not only myself but others in the process.

After all, for myself and everyone else on this earth, each morning brings with it a fresh set of challenges, often in the form of difficult thoughts that surface from the depths of the unconscious. Acknowledging these thoughts as a natural part of the human experience is the first step towards managing

them. Rather than dismissing or fearing these intrusive musings, we must all learn to accept them as integral pieces of our mental puzzles, deserving of careful attention and reflection.

The natural inclination to shy away from discomfort must be overcome to truly engage with our deeper thoughts. Confrontation here doesn't imply a battle, but instead a willingness to face these thoughts head-on. Sit with them, and to understand their origins and implications. For me, engaging with them means crafting long-form essays with actionable advice.

This process of engagement is crucial for transforming these otherwise daunting thoughts into manageable elements that can contribute to personal growth and understanding. It's become the madness to my method: 'mapping' thoughts as a means to articulate and manage them. Navigate the intricate terrain of difficult thoughts, I write them down, no matter how disjointed or unclear they may appear at first.

Once I've put them into a tangible form, I then explore their connections and origins. Through this mapping method, the abstract can become concrete, and the chaotic can become structured. Mapping not only aids in articulating these thoughts, but also in understanding their place in the broader landscape of my mind. This practical approach that turns the tumultuous

journey through the unconscious into a navigable expedition, allowing for a clearer perspective and a more profound comprehension of the self.

Embracing the Absurd Journeys of Our Unconscious Minds

To prevent the stagnation of our thoughts and the dulling of our mental landscapes, it's essential that we continually seek new sources of inspiration. This quest for novelty shouldn't be merely for amusement. It's a vital part of maintaining the dynamism of the mind. Engaging with diverse experiences, ideas, and forms of expression enriches our internal dialogue and prevents life rom becoming a tedious trek through familiar territories.

Thus, the absurdity of the mind's wanderings isn't a path to confusion but a gateway to endless discovery and rejuvenation. Venturing into the unconscious mind is like an expedition into unknown and uncharted territory, with a landscape rich with paradoxes and surprises. This exploration is inherently adventurous, filled with risks and uncertainties, but also brimming with the potential for profound insights and transformative experiences.

However, we must balance the risks of confronting unsettling thoughts and the rewards of gaining deeper self-awareness. This exploration is sure to be fraught

with potential discomfort and disorientation, but it promises the invaluable reward of a richer, more nuanced understanding of ourselves and the world. As we encounter the bizarre and the bewildering within our unconscious, we must also recognize that these experiences are integral to our personal identity and growth. By embracing of the mind's absurdities, we find not only challenges to overcome, but also the seeds of creativity, wisdom, and a deeper connection to the human experience.

This isn't merely an academic exercise. It's exploring a fundamental aspect of our human experience. By engaging with our inner worlds, we confront the enigmatic forces that shape our thoughts, behaviors, and identities. Any absurdity encountered in this exploration isn't a sign of futility, but a testament to the rich depth of the human psyche.

I urge you all to embrace this journey with open arms and a sense of humor. Recognizing the absurdity in our internal explorations can alleviate the heaviness of the journey, allowing us to navigate the chaotic streams of thought with levity and grace. The process of understanding the self is, in many ways, a playful dance with the unknown, a dance that can enrich our lives with unexpected insights and a deeper sense of connection to the world.

The journey is unpredictable, often leading to strange and unexpected destinations, reflecting the mind's inherent complexity and whimsical nature. When confronting the enigma of our unconscious mind, we're faced both with often unnamed challenges and revelations.

Recognizing the humor in our own perplexities can make the journey less daunting and more enjoyable. By mapping our unconscious through writing and creative expression, we not only learn more about ourselves but also celebrate the inherent absurdity of trying to make sense of what often defies logic or explanation. Ultimately, it's in this dance with the absurd that we find profound insights and unexpected joy.

Mapping Your Difficult Thoughts Through Writing

Upon waking each morning, I often find myself harboring difficult thoughts, but rarely do they take a useful form. We all awake with difficult thoughts every so often; some are more troubling than others. When we're weathering multiple stresses at once, these thoughts can become far more troubling and, therefore, much more difficult to express.

Exploring these difficult thoughts more intensely isn't so much for my own edification, though. It's more

about releasing the frustrations I get from stumbling over the difficulties and blocks that I encounter with some of my most difficult thoughts.

I need to find myself writing something inspiring on a regular basis. Otherwise, my work will begin to feel awfully dull. So, as I continue to seek new sources of inspiration, I also keep mapping the journeys that my mind takes in dealing with certain difficult thoughts. Doing these things, I find myself a bit more settled in my mindset, allowing me to see things for what they are and not what I'd like them to be.

So many of these thoughts often spring from my unconscious to my conscious mind without warning; indeed, trying to reason through the workings of the unconscious while conscious can be dangerous for the uninitiated intellect. But, as they say, if the adventure is dangerous, but has a potentially huge reward, then it's probably worth pursuing.

There are many interpretations of dreams and studies on the workings of the unconscious mind. But, it can be extremely dangerous to read too much into dreams. What we actually remember from dreams upon waking is often greatly distorted or is quite strange and paradoxical. Because of these difficulties, it's a tall task to frame our dreams in any meaningful way so we can explain them to others. Still, if and when we finally do, we

help others as well as ourselves, to navigate the intricate interplay between the self and the collective human experience.

~ Amelia Desertsong

Celebrating the Diversity of the Human Mind

Our world of Absurdia has become overrun by a society obsessed with uniformity, conformity, and adherence to social norms. This relentless march towards sameness clashes with the vibrant spectrum of individual thought. Understanding and appreciating our mental differences is crucial for personal growth and success. Everyone's mind is different and it's essential to appreciate our own unique voice. By nurturing our mental individuality and learning to use our minds effectively, we can unlock our potential and achieve great things, regardless of what others may think.

So, today's tour through Absurdia begins at the crossroads of conformity and the rich, untamed wilderness of the human psyche. We investigate the utter absurdity of trying to mold the kaleidoscopic human mind into a monochrome pattern, something both comical and tragic. The overwhelming expectation to align with social norms not only stifles creativity but also blinds us to the extraordinary potential residing within our unique mental landscapes.

In our tour celebrating the diversity of the human mind, we'll unravel the humor and wit hidden in the crevices of our collective pursuit of conformity. Let's learn to appreciate the ludicrous yet enlightening wonders of the collective human consciousness.

How to Understand and Accept Your Own Diverse Mind

The human mind is an incredibly complex and diverse entity. From the way we process information to the emotions we experience, each person's cognitive landscape is distinct, painted with the strokes of personal experience, emotion, and inherent nature. This diversity is what makes humanity so fascinating. It’s the driving force behind our creativity and innovation.

Yet, there’s this societal script that often directs us towards homogeneity, ignoring the vibrant spectrum of mental compositions that make humanity fascinatingly complex. With its penchant for black-and-white simplicity, society at-large strongly urges us to overlook the rich hues of individual thought. It's here, in this contrast, that the humor and irony of our collective existence shine through. We are urged to fit into predefined molds, yet it's our ability to think differently that fuels creativity and sparks innovation.

By acknowledging and embracing the uniqueness of our own minds, we can better understand our strengths and weaknesses. This is the basis of self-awareness, which is the first step in learning to understand and accept your own mind. The next step is to engage in self-reflection and introspection, which can help you identify your thought patterns, emotional responses, and cognitive strengths.

There are practical steps we can take to this end, like mindfulness practices and journaling. Such activities serve as tools to unearth the layers of our cognitive complexity. Through meditation, we can quiet the external noise, allowing us to hear the subtle nuances of our inner selves. Meanwhile, journaling provides a canvas to sketch the contours of our thoughts, revealing patterns and peculiarities that define our individuality.

Furthermore, it's essential to recognize that it's okay to be different. Our unique minds are not a flaw, but rather a gift. Embracing and nurturing our mental diversity allows us to become more resilient, adaptive, and open to new experiences. Trying to standardize the human mind paints our very individuality as an unfortunate flaw. It’s a comedic twist of fate that by understanding our unique mental landscapes, we become better equipped to navigate the world that actually is unforgiving towards individualism.

This rebellion against such anti-individualism shouldn't be held as a silent nod to diversity, but should become a loud celebration of the myriad cognitive expressions that define our humanity. We must find the humor in our differences and the wisdom in our distinctive thought processes, leading to a more profound appreciation of the many shapes and colors of the human mind.

Ignoring External Judgments About Our Uniqueness

Now, we delve into the multifaceted ludicrousness of allowing the court of public opinion to dictate the value of our unique minds. The same societal framework that prizes individual achievement at the surface level is just as liable to undercut it with a mindless chorus of conformity. While it's unfortunate that modern society often judges people based on their conformity to perceived norms, we can simply choose to ignore these external judgments. After all, these judgments only have power if we give into them.

Remember, external judgments such as peer pressure are merely a reflection of others' perspectives and biases. While it can be challenging to disregard what others think, especially when these judgments come from loved ones, keep in mind that these judgments aren't

what they at first appear. They're often less about the individual being judged and more about the insecurities and biases of the judgers.

The irony becomes particularly palpable when one considers that the same voices urging conformity are themselves echoes of unique minds conforming to a larger, often unexamined, collective mindset. This cycle of judgment and conformity is a comedy of errors, where the true folly is in forsaking one's authentic self for the fleeting approval of the unwashed masses.

Don't ever forget: your mind is your own, and no one else can truly understand or define it. Therefore, you must focus on your own path and trust in your unique abilities. This is the first step to cultivating a steadfast self-assurance, a fortress of conviction in the face of societal winds. You must recognize the farcical nature of external validation; after all, why should the chorus of the crowd drown out the solo performance of one's inner voice? Your strategy isn't just to ignore external judgments, but also to see them for what they often are: reflections of collective fears and insecurities, projected onto those who are seen to be drifting from the school of conformist thought.

Building resilience against these judgments requires a blend of humor and wisdom. You must learn to laugh at the absurdity of conforming to an arbitrary

standard that stifles the very diversity it purportedly celebrates. Simultaneously, there's wisdom in understanding that these external opinions, while they can be occasionally valuable, shouldn't be the architects of your self-worth or the boundaries of your potential.

Your unique mind is the culmination of a diverse array of experiences, passions, and innate abilities that can't be fully understood by anyone else. These create your unique individuality, your greatest asset which no one else can replicate. Once you internalize this understanding, you free yourself from the burden of seeking validation from others. This helps you to keep others' judgments from defining your own worth or dictating your own potential.

Sure, ignoring external judgments becomes an act of rebellion, a declaration of independence from the tyranny of conformity. But it's a necessary act in order to fully appreciate the comedic paradox of seeking individual approval in a world that inherently values diversity. By turning a deaf ear to unnecessary critique and fostering a self-directed path, we not only honor our unique mental landscapes. We also contribute to a broader narrative that values authentic individuality over the homogenized expectations of the crowd.

Harness the Power of Your Unique Mind

Once you've learned to understand and embrace your unique mind, the next step is to harness its power for success. You must see yourself as your life story's protagonist, armed with self-knowledge and defiance of convention, and step into the spotlight. Your story is all about coming to learn how to celebrate your distinctiveness.

Take the time to explore your thoughts, ideas, and passions without the noise of external opinions. Nurture your individuality by pursuing activities that resonate with your true self, even if they deviate from societal norms. Take comfort in the knowledge of the delightful irony that the very traits often sidelined by societal norms are the sources of our greatest strengths and innovations.

Truthfully, the engines of change and progress are powered by the diversity of thought and creativity that unique minds bring. Your quirks and idiosyncrasies can serve as the very assets that can lead to personal and professional success. So, cultivating self-confidence in this journey is crucial. The best way to do this in the face of external judgments is to recognize that you have something valuable to offer to the world precisely because of your differences. After all, the most remarkable innovations and breakthroughs have come

from individuals who dared to do things and think differently.

Once you've built up your self-confidence, define what you consider as success and take steps to reach your own goals. Identify your strengths and learn to use them effectively. You should also acknowledge and address your weaknesses, reaching out to others who have strengths in those areas. Surround yourself with supportive individuals who appreciate and value your uniqueness, and seek solace in their encouragement. Being able to focus on your strengths, while also learning to adapt and improve upon your weaknesses, your unique mind can help you achieve your goals and realize your potential.

Embrace the Diversity of Your Abilities

When you believe in yourself and acknowledge the diversity of your mental abilities, you gain the resilience and determination needed to navigate the peaks and valleys of life. Trusting your instincts and making decisions aligned with your authentic self allows you to stay true to your values and embrace your unique strengths. While the collective narrative often pushes for a bland homogeneity, the very fabric of progress and innovation is woven from the threads of individual diversity and eccentricity. The stark contrast between

what is commonly pursued and what is genuinely impactful is not only humorous, but profoundly upsetting.

The diversity of thought and perspectives is crucial for progress and innovation, which opens doors to collaboration and the exchange of ideas. While constructive criticism of your works and actions should always be taken into consideration, you must also recognize when it shouldn't apply to you or your ideas. By disregarding superfluous external judgments about your individuality, you create opportunities to connect with individuals who appreciate and respect your unique perspective. Remember that by being true to yourself, you inspire others to do the same.

To fully embrace our unique abilities, we must first believe in their value, seeing them as the unparalleled strengths that they are. This belief is the foundation of a journey that transcends the mundane and ventures into the extraordinary, where each individual's capabilities contribute to the larger realm of human achievement. The idea is to create a life script where the character you play is one of your own making, not a role imposed by societal expectations.

Our minds are wonderfully diverse and unique. Embracing our individuality and learning to effectively utilize our minds unlocks our true potential and empowers us to succeed in any field. By nurturing self-

awareness, disregarding external judgments, and harnessing the power of our unique minds, we confidently forge our own path and embrace the incredible gifts that our mental diversity offers. Your mind is inherently unique, so let it shine brightly and remain unaltered by anyone.

Moreover, embracing your unique abilities means recognizing and leveraging the diversity of your skills and perspectives in a way that enriches both your life and the lives of those around you. You must step forward into the light of self-assurance, undeterred by the shadows of doubt cast by external judgments. In this light, the absurdity of societal pressure fades, revealing the true power of individuality.

Embracing your unique abilities is an act of courage and defiance against the absurd demands of conformity. It's a celebration of our individual potential to contribute uniquely and meaningfully to the sum of human experience. This way, we not only affirm our own worth but also inspire others to recognize and celebrate the diversity and richness of their own abilities. We must turn the common narrative into one that values authenticity over uniformity.

Closing Thoughts

As we wrap up today's Chronicle, let's circle back to the heart of our narrative: the rich, often comical paradox of embracing the diversity of the human mind in a world enamored with conformity. Our look at individuality versus societal norms underscores a profound truth wrapped in garden variety absurdity:in the quest for uniformity, we overlook the very essence of humanity, which is our boundless, vibrant diversity.

I hope that this Chronicle has helped reveal the humor and wit in navigating this world that, while insisting on sameness, is unwittingly energized by the uniqueness of each individual. Celebrating and taking ownership of the diversity of our minds and abilities is more than an act of personal defiance. It's an acknowledgment that the mosaic of human experience is most beautiful when each piece retains its distinct color, shape, and texture.

The notion that we should ever strive to diminish our individuality to fit a universal mold is truly and painfully absurd. Instead, we should revel in the quirks, idiosyncrasies, and peculiarities that make us who we are. These elements aren't merely incidental to our character; they are the core of our being, the source of our strength, and the wellspring of our creativity.

So, I invite you to laugh at the folly of conformity, to question the norms that bind the spirit of individuality, and to courageously embrace the unique contours of your mind and abilities. By doing so, we not only chart a course for personal fulfillment but also inspire those around us to embark on their own journey of self-discovery and acceptance. Celebrate the absurdity of life with a sense of humor and an appreciation for the diversity of the human experience. Finally, remember that our individual quirks and talents are our keys to finding the truest expression of our humanity and the deepest fulfillment in our interconnected lives.

~ Amelia Desertsong

The Absurd Power of Our Words

Here in these “Chronicles of Absurdia”, we don't just tiptoe through the tulips of language; we leap into its very thicket, often finding ourselves tangled in its intricate vines of verbosity and verve. I often find myself entranced by simple turns of phrase uttered or penned by souls from centuries past. It’s quite stunning to me how absurd the power of language truly is, even when translated from one language to another.

Russian-Ukrainian writer Nikolai Gogol, in a moment of stark clarity, put this into perspective. He once declared, “A word aptly uttered or written cannot be cut away with an axe.” Just reading those words, you can almost picture him scribbling feverishly by candlelight, chuckling to himself about the indelible nature of a well-crafted phrase. Gogol knew, as we all secretly do, that words wield an absurd kind of magic –- they’re able to conjure realities and shatter illusions, often in the same breath.

It’s in the careful crafting of words, a marriage of melody and meaning, that their true power is revealed. A word aptly uttered or written takes on a life of its own, impervious to destructive forces. As Gogol so eloquently expressed, the spirit of the words transcends their

physical form, the ideas and expressions immortalized in ink.

In today's escapade through the wilderness of words, let's ask ourselves: Isn't it downright bizarre how these little squiggles and sounds can ignite revolutions, mend hearts, or make us chuckle at the sheer absurdity of everything?

So, guided by Gogol's timeless insight, let's embark on a journey to unravel the enigma wrapped in the riddle that is language. Let's find the fun in the fundamental, the jest in the judicious, and, of course, the absurd in the articulate. Welcome aboard!

The Double-Edged Sword of Language

Language is a delightful and, at times, devious concoction of letters and sounds. It's a veritable Pandora's box that we blithely open every time we open our mouths or set pen to paper. It's a bit like wielding a lightsaber in a crowded room – dazzling, dangerous, and decidedly unpredictable.

The 26 characters of the English alphabet can be arranged to declare undying love or provoke a belly laugh. Yet, they can also be mixed around to inadvertently start a family feud lasting three

generations. How can these little symbols and sounds so seemingly innocuous hold such power?

Learning our alphabet and the sounds associated with it is like being handed a toolkit where the hammer can just as easily construct a birdhouse or whack a thumb (or a metaphorical equivalent thereof). Think about how, "I love you" and "I loathe you" are just a couple of vowels apart, yet worlds apart in their impact. How many of us have been both architects and demolition experts in our relationships, using the same set of linguistic tools?

Let's face it, we have to be able to find humor in these linguistic absurdities. We're all linguists and bunglers wrapped into one, poets and faux pas artisans, capable of creating sonnets and gaffes with equal flair.

The power of language can be wielded as a tool for both creation and destruction. It can ignite the fires of love, stitch together the wounds of betrayal, and inspire the noblest endeavors. Yet, like a double-edged sword, it can also cleave through the bonds of friendship, sow the seeds of discord, and summon the darkest storms.

Language is a bit like cooking a soup. One day, our words can be a perfectly seasoned stew, warming and nourishing, yet the next, an over-salted concoction that nobody wants to swallow. Yet, we keep cooking, keep

speaking, and keep writing because, in this grand, often nonsensical kitchen of life, our words are the ingredients we can't do without.

So, whatever we do, and how ever we choose our words, language remains our most beloved frenemy. It's a tool for both creation and destruction, wrapped in a riddle, and served with a side of absurdity.

The Immortality of Words

Fortunately, language isn't just useful in the here and now. In fact, it can even become a time-traveling device of sorts. Words are how we can find ourselves in a conversation with the likes of Shakespeare, so many centuries after his passing, simply through reading his works. Words allow us to have an all-access pass to the greatest minds in history, only without the hassle of inventing a real time machine.

Isn't it a hoot to think that the same words that tickled the fancy of a Renaissance dandy or ruffled the feathers of a Grecian philosopher can do the same to us today? We're reading the same lines that were once brand new, hot off the quill — even if sometimes the translation is a bit wonky. It's as if words are little immortal elves, skipping merrily through time, unaffected by the wrinkles and grey hairs that plague the rest of us.

I've long been attracted by the irresistible allure of an idea well-expressed. Properly wielded, language transcends the limitations of the corporeal, etching itself into the fabric of time and space. Unyielding to the ravages of the centuries and millennia, we still today can read the words of prophets, poets, dreamers, and doyens of history.

Imagine Plato, for instance, sitting in his toga and sandals, etching his thoughts into history. Fast forward a couple millennia, and here we are, in our pajamas, nodding along with a cup of coffee in hand, as if to say, "Good point, Plato. Pass the sugar, will you?"

The irony is delicious. Here we are, creatures of the digital age, where information moves at the speed of light, and yet still we find ourselves captivated by the static, unchanging words of those long gone. Our high-tech gadgets may age faster than a banana in the sun, but "To be or not to be" remains evergreen.

Words are the real MVPs in the game of chasing immortality. They don't need anti-aging cream or fancy preservation techniques. They just hang out in old books, on monuments, or in the cloud, waiting for someone to stumble upon them and whisper, "Hey, this ancient dude really gets me."

So, hats off to the immortal words, the silent time travelers in our midst, reminding us that human thoughts, fears, and joys are timeless. If that's not a reason to chuckle and raise your glass to the ancient writers, I don't know what is. Here's to words, the ultimate conquerors of time and space, with a side of eternal wit!

The Everlasting Impact of Words

In both print and sound, words are less like inanimate strings of letters and sounds and more like living, breathing entities, perpetually creeping and crawling through the corridors of time. They wrap like vines around society's foundations, resisting the axe of time and change. It’s absurd yet marvelous how echoes from the past still shape our present, often in unseen and unintended ways. These cheeky little minstrels of meaning not only knock on the doors of our minds, but also set up camp, brew tea, and refuse to leave.

These words, even when ancient and worn, still have the audacity to shape our modern world. They're like the great-aunts and uncles at a family reunion, imparting wisdom and occasionally embarrassing anecdotes, unaffected by the rolling eyes of younger generations. "Remember when..." they begin, and

suddenly, we're transported to battles long fought, loves long lost, and triumphs long celebrated.

Consider how the words of philosophers, poets, and even the occasional madcap monarch have clung to the walls of history. They refuse to be scrubbed away by the sands of time or the latest cultural trends. It's as if Shakespeare, Austen, and their merry band of wordsmiths dipped their quills into a sort of linguistic superglue, ensuring their words would stick around, come hell or high water.

Lest we take our dear words too seriously, we can view them as timeless gatecrashers in the party of the present. They're the uninvited guests who turn out to be the life of the party, regaling us with tales of yore, and occasionally offering a nugget of wisdom just when we need it most.

In a world where everything is fast-paced and fleeting, the steadfastness of words is both absurd and magnificent. These echoes of our collective past resound through the canyon of time, reminding us that though empires may fall and technologies may evolve, a well-turned phrase is truly eternal.

#QuoteQuest

My fellow time-travelers and intrepid seekers of sagacity, I entreat you to embark on a #QuoteQuest. Your mission: dive into the dusty, dog-eared pages of history to fish out a quote - not just any quote, but one that sings (even if a bit off-key) to the tune of our current life conundrums.

Select a century or a region, like a culinary connoisseur choosing the perfect cheese to accompany their wine, and unearth a quote that resonates with a personal goal or pickle you're currently pondering. It's a bit like asking a wise old tree for advice, except the tree is a book, and the advice is several hundred years old.

Let’s say you're grappling with the eternal struggle of waking up early for that jog you've promised yourself you'd do. "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise," quoted Benjamin Franklin. Well, Ben, that's easier said than done when the siren song of late-night Netflix binge-watching beckons, isn't it?

Perhaps you're wrestling with the art of patience in a world where instant gratification is king. To this, a stroll through the serene gardens of Eastern philosophy might offer Lao Tzu's timeless whisper, "Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished." Patience, it

seems, was as much a virtue in ancient China as it is in the modern world of fast food and faster internet.

This quest isn't just about just finding a quote you identify with, though. It's also about forging a connection with another human mind who has tread the path of life before us. You'll soon realize that humans have been humans, facing the same old things, no matter what they were wearing or doing.

So, grab your metaphorical shovel and start digging through the annals of history. Who knows what nuggets of wisdom you might uncover, dust off, and apply to the comedy of errors that is modern living? May your #QuoteQuest be fruitful, your connections to the past amusing, and your resolutions to today's challenges a tad more enlightened. Happy hunting!

Closing Thoughts

As we wind down this chapter of "Chronicles of Absurdia," let's pause and ponder the peculiar power packed into our parlance. Each word we utter, each sentence we scribble, leaves a footprint in the wet cement of time – messy, perhaps, but undeniably permanent.

Every chuckle-inducing quip, every tear-jerking tale, and every accidentally-sent text message – they're all little pieces of you, floating out into the universe. We

leave breadcrumbs of our essence everywhere we go, in the form of words, unintentional or not.

Words bestow upon us a power that's both wonderful and slightly terrifying; it’s like being handed the reins to a benevolent but slightly unpredictable dragon. You can have it breathe fire to warm a heart, or in a less fortunate turn of events, accidentally incinerate your neighbor's metaphorical cat. But, that's the beauty and the burden of our power of language.

Through the written word, we can still experience the passionate speeches delivered by statesmen and visionaries. We can picture these orators, standing tall like mighty oak trees, their roots reaching deep into the fertile soil of their beliefs. Like leaves, their words flutter on the winds of change as we speak them, leaving lasting imprints on our own hearts and minds as much as those who first heard them.

Armed with the power of language, we each hold within our grasp the keys to the kingdom of creation. The gift of expression is a treasure beyond compare. Truly, as Gogol put it, a word aptly uttered or written cannot be cut away, for it’s the embodiment of a little part of ourselves that we can share with everyone else. Let’s wield our words with care and the absurd, awesome responsibility that comes with our verbal and written prowess.

~ Amelia Desertsong, January 26th, 2024

When I Took a Moment to Breathe

At most points in my life, I haven't written nearly as much as I would like. The cacophony of life's obligations have consistently drowned out the serene whisper of creativity. So, whenever a rare moment of respite has allowed me to breathe, to step back from the relentless treadmill of daily chores and endless tasks, I found myself confronting the mirror of introspection. It wasn't merely about where I stood as a writer; that reflection spiraled deeper, questioning the essence of who I was as a person.

As a child, my ambitions were as numerous as the stars. Yet, the tome that contained my successes often remained unopened, the pages blank, yearning for ink. Still, there were a few moments of triumph here and there. In younger, more introspective days, my poetry was a garden of self-reflection, blooming with the vibrant colors of introspection and insight.

However, as the years unfurled like a scroll in a relentless wind, my garden grew over with the weeds of trivialities and minute details, obscuring the path to deeper self-questioning. Many of my journals became overgrown with message self-doubt and self-loathing, becoming Venus fly traps I eventually had to destroy for my own sanity.

What should've been a straightforward question — "What do I have to say, and how should I go about saying it?" — became lost in a labyrinth of life's minutiae. The absurdity of it all lay in my inability to savor life's minor victories,. It's as if every day demanded a grand slam, every action a monumental legacy. This relentless pursuit of grandeur set an unrealistic stage where satisfaction remained ever elusive, leading me to question, why could I not simply seize the moment and let the river of life carry me forward?

In this edition of the Chronicles of Absurdia, I've decided to dig a bit into my own personal saga. It doesn't begin with grand tales of conquest or enlightenment, but with the humbling realization of time lost to the voracious appetite of the mundane. So, today we embark on a narrative of rediscovery, of learning to appreciate the peculiar comedy that life scripts for us.

Let's learn how to find meaning in the pauses between the chaos, where hidden elements of existence whisper the subtle truths we often overlook. In the following pages, we shall navigate the absurdities that pepper our lives, seeking wisdom in the whimsical and learning to decode the inexplicable jests of the cosmos.

The Burdens of Setting Unrealistic Expectations

As I reflect on the past four decades of my life, I've come to realize the absurdity of the expectations we set for ourselves. Each day unfolds like a performance where I serve three roles — the lead actor, director, and harshest critic — striving for a standing ovation in the form of grand accomplishments. Yet, this pursuit reveals itself to be a relentless chase after the wind.

Like a blissfully ignorant rodent on a hamster wheel, I ran tirelessly for decades, believing that success must be monumental to be meaningful. Each morning, I'd wake with the ambition to hit a grand slam, not just in one aspect of life, but in every role I played. Writer, provider, creator –- in all three, I sought extraordinary triumphs on the daily. This relentless drive wasn't really ambitious, though; rather, it was simply absurdly unrealistic, setting the stage for an ongoing drama of disappointment.

Why did I have this insatiable need for grandeur in every act? Well, in my quest for seismic success, I overlooked the subtle yet profound achievements: a well-crafted sentence, a positive comment from a reader, or a peaceful moment of creative thought. This misalignment of expectation versus reality became a source of constant strife.

The demand for daily grandeur was not only unsustainable, but also blinded me to the value of incremental progress and the joy found in simple successes. The burdens of setting unrealistic expectations obscured the path to genuine fulfillment. So, what cast such a long shadow over the small, yet significant, triumphs of everyday life? It all began with my vocational struggles, the writing career that never quite emerged as I always imagined it would.

Vocational Struggles and the Mirage of Immediate Success

My journey through the vocational landscape has been less of a straight path and more of a meandering trek through a dark, forbidding forest flush with possibilities and pitfalls. This trek was underpinned by the quest for a calling that would serve the dual gods of personal fulfillment and financial necessity. Writing, as my first and truest skill, seemed the natural path for me to take. Yet, it proved to be a thorny trail, abundant with effort yet sparse in reward.

These vocational struggles were magnified by an illusion that haunted me persistently: the mirage of immediate success. Like a desert traveler desperate for water, I chased the promise of quick, lucrative wins, only to find them evaporating upon closer inspection. This

illusion led me down various alleys — video production, reselling ventures, and more — each time hoping for a sudden windfall, a quick fix to the enduring issue of sustenance and satisfaction.

Yet, each venture taught me a harsh lesson in the realities of success and commitment. Dabbling in diverse domains without true dedication, I spread myself too thin. I became a Jill of All Trades, Master of None, pulled in too many directions to truly excel in any. Still, I hung onto some absurd expectation that success should be immediate and effortless. This meant neglecting the seemingly obvious, but often hidden truth that mastery and achievement are often slow-cooking, requiring patience, persistence, and focused commitment.

My downfall was this failure to commit wholeheartedly to one path if immediate results weren't forthcoming. This was a Sisyphean endeavor, where every new venture started with hope but ended in the boulder of disappointment rolling back down the hill. All my efforts inevitably failed, leaving me to start again, with little to show for my efforts.

This vocational carousel spun around the absurd belief that the right path would yield quick, bountiful fruits. Yet, the reality is that success, especially in fields driven by passion such as writing and art, often demands a slow, steady, and sometimes painstaking journey. But

no matter what we choose to pursue, life itself is punctuated by small victories and frequent setbacks, constantly challenging how we perceive success and fulfillment.

The Trial of Multiple Paths

My adult life has been marked by a persistent trial of multiple paths, relentlessly searching for a niche where my passion and provisions intersect. I've explored avenues as diverse as video production and the world of reclaiming and resale. Each path seemed promising, offering the allure of a solution to the perennial problem of balancing financial needs with the desire for creative fulfillment.

This exploratory phase wasn't a failure in the diversity of my attempts, but rather in the manner of my poor execution. In trying to wear multiple hats, I found myself being pulled in too many directions. Therefore, I was unable to devote the necessary focus and energy to excel in any single endeavor. This fragmentation of effort resulted in a superficial engagement with each pursuit, like skimming the surface of a vast ocean without ever diving deep enough to discover any treasures below.

For example, my ventures into video production and resale, while providing a temporary financial respite, ultimately felt like detours from my true calling. The

pressure to generate income led me to prioritize these activities over my innate passion for writing. It took me hitting rock bottom to realize that monetary gain at the expense of personal satisfaction is usually unproductive. Despite the initial promise of financial stability, these ventures lacked the soul-satisfying essence that writing offered. If you discover that what should be a joyful exploration is turning into a taxing ordeal, you're on the wrong path.

Realizing that happiness should be paramount, regardless of the financial outcome, is a turning point for anyone. Yet, the necessity of earning a living remains a 'necessary evil,' creating a paradoxical situation: my pursuit of happiness always seemed at odds with the practical need for income. This conflict underscored the absurdity of trying to serve two masters: the heart's passion and the wallet's demands.

Even in the midst of my career woes, the irony wasn't lost on me that in the multitude of ways to make money, commitment to a specific plan was crucial. My scattered attempts were akin to casting a wide net with too many holes; nothing was retained long enough to yield real success. The majority of my adult life was shadowed by this inability to commit fully to one thing, especially if it didn't promise immediate rewards. This impatience for quick results was my undoing. Of course,

this a common tale among those who chase the wind of varied ventures without planting firm roots in any one of them.

While diversification of interests is usually a good thing, the expectation that success can be found in the breadth of activities rather than in the depth of commitment to a single path is absurd. It took me far too long to realize this, but once I did it was a sobering lesson. I've now fully accepted the importance of focus, dedication, and the willingness to weather the slow and often arduous journey towards meaningful achievement.

The Temptation to Abandon Writing Altogether

At a particularly low ebb in my vocational saga, the idea of completely abandoning writing for video production tantalized me. This moment seems profoundly absurd in hindsight, considering my core identity as a writer. Yet, the siren call of potentially lucrative video content creation led me to entertain this drastic shift. At the time, it was possible to rationalize such a drastic shift in creative mediums.

Venturing into video production was like stepping onto a foreign stage, though. The immediacy and visual allure of videos seemed promising, a stark contrast to the slow, solitary craft of writing. I flirted with the idea of

transforming my written content into videos, in the hope that the dynamic medium would reinvigorate both my creative spirit and financial inflows.

However, the transition from text to speech was fraught with unexpected challenges. I've always known that my articulation in writing far surpasses my spoken clarity. The spoken word, with its fleeting nature, proved a poor vessel for the depth and nuance that I could easily convey through writing. Yet, I pressed on, hoping to transform my long-held weakness into a newfound strength. Still, my forays into speech-to-text technology, intended as a bridge between these worlds, ended in frustration. What was supposed to be a seamless flow of ideas into spoken content often degenerated into rambling, disjointed narratives.

The absurdity deepened when I realized that even the act of scripting videos was futile for me. I could never adhere to a predetermined script, always veering off into impromptu monologues that stretched far beyond their intended length. This tendency underscored a fundamental mismatch between my thought processes and the medium of video. Eventually, I realized that I was making a monumental mistake.

Even when I managed to earn money through video content creation for third parties, the endeavor left me feeling hollow. The frustration of the process, coupled

with the dissatisfaction with the end product, led to extreme burnout. The more I engaged with video production, the more alienated I felt from my intrinsic love for writing. This new venture was eroding my core identity, and finally recognizing this after some months was a jarring wake-up call.

This period of my life was a stark lesson in forsaking one's natural talents and passions for the allure of quick financial gains or trendy mediums. In hindsight, these experiences highlight the importance of alignment between your skills and chosen form of expression. I never fully appreciated the dangers of deviating from one's authentic path in pursuit of superficial success until that time.

Spontaneity as a Catalyst for Change

In a twist of fate, driven by desperation and a need for change, I took a spontaneous leap that would redraw my life path. I took a moment to breathe, then decided to act on the next impulse that came to me. This would be the creation of The Phoenix Desertsong website. This act of impulsive creativity stood in stark contrast to my previous calculated endeavors. Thus, it marked a pivotal moment for me in embracing the absurdity of life's unpredictable course.

The decision to build a personal website and brand wasn't the result of meticulous planning or strategic foresight. It was, indeed, a spontaneous combustion of pent-up creativity and frustration. Given my recent track record of vocational wandering and financial instability, it seemed a particularly absurd decision. Yet, this spur-of-the-moment decision became the catalyst for a profound mindset transformation.

This leap into the unknown, guided by intuition rather than logic, allowed me to break free from the constraints of conventional expectations and financial pressures. It was a return to my roots, giving myself the creative freedom I had long denied in pursuit of more "practical" endeavors. The Phoenix Desertsong website has become a sanctuary where I could write, explore, and express myself without the shackles of external validation or immediate financial reward.

The website's growth mirrored my own personal evolution. I began to rediscover the joy of writing and the value of authentic self-expression. What started as a spontaneous act evolved into a committed project. It's provided a steady platform for my voice and creativity. This newfound stability and focus contrasted sharply with my earlier frenetic, fragmented pursuits.

In an unexpected turn, this spontaneous venture led to meeting the love of my life. This further solidified

the idea that embracing spontaneity, when all else fails, can lead to profound personal and professional fulfillment. Our partnership, born from a shared creative spirit, blossomed into a collaboration that enriched both our work and our personal lives.

The story of The Phoenix Desertsong website underscores the transformative power of spontaneity. Truly, sometimes the most absurd decisions can lead to the most meaningful outcomes. The results of this spontaneous action taught me that embracing the unexpected and allowing for spontaneous action can open doors to opportunities and connections that rigid planning and cautious deliberation might never unveil.

My Rediscovery of Passion and Commitment to Writing

After navigating the chaotic waters of various vocations and creative endeavors, I finally anchored myself in the tranquil harbor of writing. This return wasn't just a retreat to familiar territory, but a conscious commitment to my foremost skill and passion. My earlier deviations appeared starkly absurd as I rediscovered the profound satisfaction that writing alone could offer to me.

In this phase of my life, writing has transcended its previous role as merely a professional endeavor or a means to financial ends. It's evolved into a sanctuary of

self-expression, a place where I can explore the intricacies of life and articulate the nuances of human experience. This commitment to writing marked a pivotal shift from the frenetic search for a multifaceted career to a focused pursuit of authorship.

The concept of authorship now stood before me not just as a vocational goal but as a life mission. The irony of this journey wasn't lost on me: in seeking to write the grand narrative of my life, I had overlooked the power of writing itself to provide meaning and fulfillment. The process of planning books, though still in its infancy, became a beacon of direction, guiding me through the introspective process of identifying what truly mattered in my life.

This dream that had lingered in the background of my tumultuous career journey, but finally became realized with the publishing of my poetry book and short essay collection. But, I still felt unfulfilled in what I'd accomplished. So, the idea of writing a book about appreciating life's absurdities crystallized, to share my lessons learned about the significance of the mundane, the beauty of the ordinary, and the importance of pausing to breathe in the whirlwind of existence.

This project symbolized not just a vocational aspiration, but a personal manifesto, encapsulating the ethos of cherishing the fleeting, often overlooked

moments that weave the fabric of our lives. These ideas, of course, became the Chronicles of Absurdia, from which you're reading right now.

In fully committing to writing, I embraced not only my greatest skill, but also the therapeutic and reflective practice it offered. Writing is the clearest mirror for me to reflect my inner world. It's what best allows me to process experiences, celebrate small victories, and confront the absurdities of life with humor and grace. This commitment signified a homecoming to my true self. It was a necessary reconciliation with my identity as a writer, and a resolve to honor this identity in both my personal and professional life.

Thus, this absurd journey full of detours and diversions culminated in a profound realization: that the core of my fulfillment lay in the simple, yet profoundly challenging, act of writing. This realization wasn't just a professional decision. It was a life choice, affirming the power of words to shape reality, heal wounds, and capture the fleeting beauty of existence.

Life, in its unpredictable and often nonsensical trajectory, offers a canvas on which the bizarre and the beautiful coexist, painting a picture that can only be understood when stepped back and viewed in its entirety. In my journey, these absurd moments—those of spontaneous decisions, unanticipated changes, and the

pursuit of varied passions—have been the most enlightening. They have revealed the richness of life's tapestry, woven with threads of the unexpected and the unplanned.

These moments urge us to question our rigid expectations and to embrace the fluidity of life, acknowledging that our plans are mere sketches on the ever-changing canvas of existence. If I've learned just one thing from this entire trek through the absurd, it's this: Embracing life's absurdity means accepting that we cannot control everything, nor should we attempt to even try.

Actionable Advice to Maintain Purpose and Fulfillment

The predictable is often overshadowed by the unexpected. So, in order to avoid the quagmire of vocational despair I once endured, here are practical steps to embrace the absurdity of life while maintaining a sense of purpose and fulfillment:

Schedule Time for Self-Reflection and Creative Expression: In the ceaseless flow of responsibilities and distractions, carve out moments for introspection and expression. Whether through journaling, blogging, simply jotting down thoughts, writing can be a powerful tool for understanding and appreciating the bizarreness of life. It

helps you to process experiences, celebrate small victories, and articulate the absurdities you observe in a constructive way.

Set Realistic Expectations for Yourself: Aiming for grand slams in every aspect of life is not only unrealistic, but also diminishes the joy of smaller achievements. So, instead set achievable goals and learn to find satisfaction in incremental progress. This approach reduces the pressure and disappointment that come from unmet grandiose expectations, allowing you to appreciate and celebrate the small wins.

Commit to a Primary Path, But Stay Adaptable: While it's important to focus and invest deeply in your chosen passion or career, you must remain open to life's unpredictable twists. Dedication doesn't equal inflexibility. Rather, it means being committed enough to persist but also adaptable enough to pivot when necessary. This balance between commitment and adaptability helps in navigating the unpredictable nature of life while still pursuing your passion.

Use Spontaneity as a Tool for Discovery: Allow yourself to be spontaneous, embracing the unpredictable moments that life offers. These unexpected experiences can lead to profound insights and opportunities. Spontaneity helps break the monotony of routine and

open doors to new paths that you might never have considered in a strictly planned life.

Practice Gratitude for the Present Moment: In the midst of absurdity, we must cultivate a grateful attitude. Acknowledging the value of the present, with all its oddities and charms, grants us a deeper appreciation for life. A grateful mindset transforms how you view daily experiences, turning ordinary moments into extraordinary reflections of life's inherent beauty and complexity.

By integrating these practices into your daily life, you can navigate the absurdities with a sense of humor, resilience, and wisdom. These steps encourage a life lived with intention and joy. We must acknowledge the absurd as not just a facet of existence, but as a fundamental aspect that adds color, depth, and meaning to our journey.

Closing Thoughts

In wrapping up this wild roller coaster ride of vocational vacillation, it's clear that life's script is more comedic than tragic, more serendipitous than structured. As I've fumbled through the chapters of my own narrative, chasing grandiose dreams and wrestling with existential quandaries, I've stumbled upon a few laughable truths. Primarily, the universe has a peculiar

sense of humor, often placing the punchline in the plot twists of our meticulously laid plans.

Indeed, the saga of my vocational and creative journey reads less like a polished manuscript and more like a series of rough drafts. Each enjoys its own set of annotations and revisions. It's been a process, learning to dance and sing in the heavy rain of absurdities, rather than waiting for the storm to pass. Singing blissfully in the rain has taught me that the most meaningful moments often arrive unannounced, dressed in the guise of mundane occurrences or spontaneous decisions.

If there's anything more unpredictable than life, it's the expectation that we can script it to our liking. It's like trying to pen a novel with a feather constantly tickling your nose; the task is as futile as it is amusing. So, I've learned to hold the pen of my life with a lighter grip. I must allow my story to unfold with its own rhythm and pace, not force it into a predefined narrative full of stereotypes and societal biases.

While the road I've traveled was littered with the debris of unrealistic expectations and vocational false starts, it was also lined with scenic views of introspection and self-revelation. Each misstep and every detour has been a paragraph in the greater narrative of my life. They contribute to a story rich in lessons and laughter.

So, here's to embracing the absurdities, for they are not just the footnotes in our life story but the very essence that gives it flavor and fervor. After all, isn't life's most exquisite irony that in the pursuit of writing my epic, I discovered the epicness in just writing about life itself? The next time you're feeling stuck, take a moment to breathe. Then, if you get a spontaneous urge to just try something new, as long as it doesn't kill you, why not just go for it?

~ Amelia Desertsong

How to Choose Your Rabbit Holes Wisely

Overthinking: the mind's favorite pastime! It's the art of taking a simple thought for a marathon, sprint, and obstacle course all rolled into one. You know the drill: one moment, you're pondering what to have for lunch, and the next, you're contemplating the culinary preferences of 14th-century monarchs. Overthinking is less of a straight line and more of a squiggle drawn by a caffeinated squirrel.

Then there are the rabbit holes, those irresistible tunnels of thought that promise adventure, but often lead to the land of "What on earth was I thinking about for the last three hours?" This is the truth of my own existence most days. Chasing these rabbits is like trying to catch smoke with a net; it's a whimsical, often fruitless endeavor.

But, let's be honest, who can resist the allure of a good rabbit hole? They're like mental potato chips — no one can stop at just one. So, we chase after these elusive bunnies of the brain, hoping that maybe, this time we'll catch something profound. Perhaps, we'll at least remember why we walked into the room in the first place.

Yet, for all the meandering and muddling these ventures into the labyrinth of our minds might seem,

they're not without their charm. Deep thought, often regarded as that grand old pastime of philosophers and daydreamers alike, often veers off the productivity path. Yet, in its winding and whimsical way, it serves a noble purpose. Amidst the chaos of chasing shadows and pondering paradoxes, there's a strange, stabilizing force at work.

These mental escapades can offer a peculiar type of solace. As we navigate the murky waters of "what ifs" and "whys," we find ourselves momentarily free from the ruckus of the everyday. In the absurdity of overthinking, there's a momentary anchor, a brief respite allowing our moods to steady on the seesaw of life.

Also, let’s not forget the satisfaction of a successful rabbit hole venture! There’s the taste of sweet victory when untangling a mental knot, of following a thought thread to its end, even if that end is miles from where we intended to go. There's a quiet thrill in the journey through our minds, a celebration of curiosity and contemplation that, while it may not always lead to answers, can bring us a great sense of fulfillment.

So, while much of the world may see our overthinking and rabbit hole expeditions as frivolous follies, we know the truth. With all their twists and turns, these ventures are part of the sublime comedy of being human; they’re a key part of our endless quest for

understanding and the unexpected delights found along the way.

The Lure of the Absurd

The lure of the absurd can be much like an irresistible carnival, where the rides are complex thoughts, and the grand prize for its contests are rare gems of epiphany! These rabbit hole rides are siren songs for the intellectually curious, promising mysteries and revelations at every twist and turn. The thrill of delving deeper and deeper can become addictive, peeling back layers of reality to reveal the quirky core of why things are as they are.

Think of deep thinking as a gourmet meal for the mind. Each morsel is a new idea, a flavor you've never tasted before; so, naturally, you crave the next bite! But, some of us actually become gastronomes of thought, sampling a smorgasbord of concepts and theories. At first, it’s like an all you can eat buffet, where the dishes are endless, and each one is more tantalizing than the last.

But, beware, dear fellow thought gastronomes, for eventually you will push well past the point of satiation, into indigestion, and before you know it, into gastronomic distress. The further your thoughts lead you away from the safety of the familiar, the more winding your path

through the realm of the absurd. Soon, the ground beneath your feet is made of uneasy questions rather than concrete answers. Soon, as you're chasing the elusive white rabbit through a forest thick with paradoxes and puzzles, you're totally lost.

Still, human beings need a break from the ordinary journey, spending some free time on an expedition through the Wonderland of our own minds. When we decide to go with the flow of our streams of consciousness, you're not just thinking; you're embarking on an odyssey through the fantastic and bizarre. The deeper you go, the more enchanting the world becomes, filled with wonders and weirdness that defy logical explanation.

Yet, the beauty of the absurd is that it doesn't need to make sense for us to appreciate it. We need a playground for our brains, where the rules of logic are twisted into pretzels. The only requirement to do this is an open mind and a hearty appetite for the unknown. So, I invite you to embrace the madness, savor the strange, and let the lure of the absurd pull you into its colorful carnival replete with rabbit holes. Just watch your step.

The Peril of Chasing Shiny Objects

Part of watching your step at the carnival of curiosities is paying mind to our inevitable attraction to

“shiny objects.” We each have our own mind's collection of dazzling discoveries and profound insights that we just can't wait to pick up and polish to perfection, whether we admit it or not. In some ways, we’re much like magpies, attracted to anything sparkling with the promise of intellectual stimulation or a good old-fashioned brain teaser.

Sadly, the sheen often quickly fades. Today's brilliant epiphany is tomorrow's relic, collecting dust on the shelves of our consciousness. Among them are masterpieces of the moment, such as the grand theory you concocted about the socio-political implications of your neighbor's lawn flamingos. What may have seemed profound with the allure of novelty now languishes at the lost and found section of your mind.

This tendency to be infatuated with our latest mental creations is a peculiar quirk of human nature. Like many creatives, I myself treat them like trophies in an ever-expanding cabinet of curiosities. I’ll spend hours on end crafting these ideas with tender care, only to abandon them when the next shiny thought catches my eye. It's as if our brains play host a never-ending gala, with each idea a guest vying for the spotlight, only to be upstaged by the next new arrival.

Yet, there's something endearingly human about this pursuit. While shiny objects can lose their luster over

time, they serve as milestones, marking the journeys we've taken through the landscapes of our imagination. They remind us of where we've been, what we've pondered, and the endless possibilities that still await us.

It's important that we aren't too harsh on these fleeting fascinations, long as we don't allow them to take over our lives. They may be ephemeral, but they are ours, each one a sparkling fragment of our own unique perspective. We should admire them for what they are: fleeting fireworks of the mind, lighting up the sky of our consciousness with their brief but brilliant displays. Once when they inevitably fade into smoke and darkness, we can look forward to the next shimmering thought on the horizon. Each day, there's so much ready to be discovered, cherished, and eventually, lovingly released into the ether of memory.

Weighing the Worth of Wonderland

We've all retreated into Wonderland at one time or another, perhaps on a fairly regular basis and more than we'd like to admit. What makes this mystical realm of the mind so appealing is that it's where reason takes a back seat and the impossible is merely improbable. But, what's the real estate value in Wonderland? Is this venture a wise investment of our mental currency, or are we just stockpiling whimsical but worthless trinkets?

Let's face it: not all rabbit holes are created equal. A few may lead to treasure troves of enlightenment, while most others end up in the storage room of the mundane, unworthy of our time. We've all been down a path of inquiry that promised so much intrigue, only to find ourselves at a dead end, surrounded by the echoing laughter of our own high expectations.

Yet, there's that irresistible urge to dive headfirst into the next hole, with the hope that maybe, this time it'll be different. But, what are we really seeking? Are we just on a wild gopher chase, burrowing further away from happiness and fulfillment? What we should be seeking instead is the keys to our dreams.

Each rabbit hole we dive down is often a bet placed against our better judgment. We wager precious time and energy on the off chance of striking intellectual gold. While there’s certainly value in taking risks, we must remember that the house most often wins. Many times, we're left with nothing but a handful of "what if's" and a slightly embarrassing story to share at parties. But, if we’ve learned anything from the experience, we become better for having tried.

Still, we must weigh the worth of our trips into Wonderland with a discerning eye. Are these meandering quests enhancing our journey towards personal dreams and happiness? Or, are they merely detours, scenic

routes leading nowhere in particular? We must learn to strike a delicate balance between curiosity and practicality. While it can be healthy to occasionally give into the allure of the unknown, there's still value in the comfort of the familiar.

Therefore, the trick isn't to avoid the rabbit holes altogether, but to choose them wisely. Which paths have the potential to enrich our lives, and which are just scenic routes to Nowheresville? Wonderland is vast, and its wonders are many, but not all are going to be worth our time. With some discernment and perhaps a dash of luck, who knows what marvels we might discover?

It's OK to Go Off the Map Sometimes

In the grand, whimsical odyssey we call life, we're often sold a map that promises a straight path to the treasure chest of traditional success. You know, the one with the big house, the flashy car, and the job title that makes strangers nod in impressed acknowledgment. But, as we chase these prepackaged, homogenized dreams, armed with our shovels and treasure maps, there's a dawning realization that maybe we're digging in the wrong spot. Maybe the X marks a spot where the chest is filled not with gold, but with a polite note suggesting we've missed the point of life entirely.

With those of us who come to such a crippling realization, it's like finally getting the punchline to a joke that everyone else missed. It turns out, the dreams we should be chasing, the ones that don't quite fit into the neatly labeled boxes of conventional success, are more like wild geese than domesticated ducks. We can't waddle obediently all in a row with the suits and jackets; we should instead allow our dreams take flight, allowing them to lead us on a merry chase through the clouds of ambition and desire. While our more traditionally successful counterparts might look on with furrowed brows of confusion, we know that the view from up here is spectacular.

Of course, with every flight of fancy, there's the risk of a turbulent journey. Some dreams are magical portals to new insights and joys, while others are just... holes. The art of chasing dreams, then, isn't in avoiding the holes altogether, but in learning which ones are worth the dive. It's about peeking into the abyss and saying, "Not you, hole number three. You look like a one-way ticket to a week of existential angst."

Part of the absurd comedy of life is trying to navigate a reality that refuses to adhere to a script, even if we try and force it to bend to our will. For us to truly flourish in life, we must learn to appreciate the bizarre beauty of the chase, the oddity of our ambitions, and the

delightful unpredictability of our paths. We come to appreciate that the spice of life is in the stories we gather and the laughter we share at our own bewildering choices. As we do, we come to realize that the real treasure isn't at the end of the hunt, but in the hunt itself.

So, as we continue on this peculiar journey, let's raise a glass to the rabbit holes, the wild geese, and the absurdly beautiful quest for a life less ordinary. May your path be crooked, your laughter loud, and your dreams gloriously and defiantly yours.

Here's to the dreamers, the thinkers, and the eternal optimists — may your rabbit holes be ever fruitful, and your Wonderland adventures always worth the trip! Cheers!

Closing Thoughts

At the end of the day, reflect on the rabbit holes you ventured down. Ask yourself if they brought you closer to your dreams or were merely distractions. Use this reflection to guide your focus tomorrow.

Also, always contemplate the idea that life is filled with absurdities and inexplicable choices. Recognize that while some rabbit holes are worth exploring, others serve as distractions. Commit to making conscious choices that

align with your dreams and bring joy to yourself and others.

Remember, the journey through this absurdity we all call life is not about avoiding these rabbit holes, but rather learning which ones are worth your time.

~ Amelia Desertsong, January 18th, 2024

Bathed in Bluelight

Today, let's take a moment to shine a light – a bright bluelight, to be exact – on our modern-day fixation with backlit screens. Our world has quietly become one in which we've become like a gentle flutter of moths to a warm flame, mirrored by our own unending ritual dance around the cool glow of our devices.

Most of us have made bluelight a daily bathing ritual, one performed in the quiet corners of coffee shops, in the dimly lit rooms of our homes, and even in bustling city streets. Many faces are illuminated not by the sun or the stars, but by the ever-present glow of screens. We're often draw deeply into the bright bluelight of our screens, often forgetting the world beyond.

This humorous juxtaposition isn't just for laughs. Rather, it's meant as a gentle nudge to remind us of the absurdity inherent in our daily lives. As we swipe, tap, and scroll, are we not just like those moths, entranced by the light? In a twist of fate that even Van Gogh couldn't have painted, we find ourselves bathed not in starlight, but in bluelight, navigating not a canvas of night skies, but a digital cosmos that fits neatly in our palms.

The Absurdity of Our Screen-Dominated Lives

How did we come to live in this peculiar world where screens reign supreme? Unlike the ancient mariners whose eyes were constantly gazing upon the stars trying to find direction, our modern eyes are perpetually fixed on the luminescent glow of digital displays. These screens have become like our modern-day constellations, guiding us through the intricacies of daily life, from navigating the urban jungles to deciphering the complexities of human connections.

This cosmic comparison isn't merely poetic; it's a testament to how our reliance on screens has become as fundamental as the stars were to our ancestors. These rectangles of bluelight all around us are now how we navigate life, through pixels and light. Yet, unlike the celestial bodies that inspired awe and wonder, our screens often lead us into a labyrinth of endless scrolling and virtual escapades.

As the scribe of these absurd chronicles, I confess to being ensnared in these bluelight spectacles. I spend many hours of my own day staring into a couple bright rectangles of bluelight. From the moment I wake to the last bleary-eyed check of email at night, my whole world is often framed within the confines of these four-cornered spaces. This is typical for many folks of my Millennial generation, and even more true for younger generations.

Sadly, bluelight can be quite harsh on the eyes. It has a significant impact on our circadian rhythms, the natural cycles that regulate our sleep and wakefulness. Bluelight can also affect our mood, cognition, and alertness, depending on the timing and duration of exposure.

So, is it worth the price to our vision, both physically and mentally, to stay connected with the world? Oftentimes, my little conversations and musings over cellular networks and cable lines are all that get me through my day. Faced with endless streams of emails, text messages, breaking news, and various forms of digital entertainment, I'm part of a generation bathed in bluelight. Even my own rituals and routines are dictated by the silent hum of technology, whether I like it or not.

Yet, amidst this seemingly bleak portrayal of a blue lit world, there lies a silver lining. For someone who navigates the turbulent seas of neurodivergence and wrestles with ever-present specters of anxiety, these screens are more than just glowing rectangles. For me, they are a lifeline.

In the paradoxical world of Absurdia, digital connectivity emerges as a beacon of hope, a tool for managing the chaos of my mind. It's through these screens that I, and many others, find solace, understanding, and a sense of belonging. They offer a

platform for expression, a means to reach out when the weight of solitude becomes too burdensome.

So, as we contemplate the absurdity of our screen-dominated existence, let's also acknowledge the strange comfort it brings to those sailing in stormy mental waters. In this ballet of light and pixels, we find not just the greatest absurdity of our times, but also an unexpected ally in our quest for sanity and connection in the vast digital universe.

Bluelight Devices as a Creative Outlet and Benefit to Mental Health

Writing has emerged for me not just as a craft, but as a vital sanctuary for a tumultuous mind. Whenever I find myself alone with my thoughts, writing is usually the best outlet for my overwhelming deluge of thoughts. For me, the act of writing transcends mere self-expression; it becomes a voyage through the stormy seas of emotion. Each word I pen is like building a lighthouse guiding me through the fog of my own psyche.

In a world where my mind often feels like a ship adrift, writing anchors me to a semblance of stability. It allows me to navigate the unpredictable currents of neurodivergence and anxiety, transforming chaotic thoughts into structured narratives. This creative process isn't just therapeutic, it's a means of survival. It's

my way of charting a course through my internal tempests and emerge with a clearer vision of myself and the world around me.

Many of the stops my train of thought makes on its journey through Absurdia aren't pleasant ones. Sometimes, I feel forced to have to go back and edit old scribblings, just to give me something to do. I must keep my brain busy to retain some bit of sanity. Otherwise, I fear that tomorrow I'll turn in on myself and never return to the living world, drowning in an endless reverie.

When it comes to managing my fears and my self-perception, my digital writing journey isn't without its perils. One of most haunting fears is the dread of being misunderstood, of having my words — the very essence of my being — misconstrued as madness. This fear isn't unfounded, for in my own life story, brilliance and insanity have treaded a fine line. I've long feared the appearance of white coats at my door. But, I know I'm not insane. I'm simply too brilliant for my own good; at least, that's what I've been told.

It's a daunting challenge to not constantly be second-guessing my thoughts, wondering how they'll be perceived in the harsh light of societal judgment. So, I'm constantly walking on eggshells when it comes to expressing myself, especially in the harsh world of the

internet blogosphere. In response to these societal pressures, my self-expression has evolved into an art of disguise. My true thoughts often find themselves cloaked in metaphors and allegories, like a protective shield of my true nature.

This necessity to veil my ideas leaves me at odds with trying to balance the desire to be understood with the need to protect my inner world from misinterpretation. With each new issue of "Chronicles of Absurdia," I constantly struggle with revealing enough to be relatable, yet concealing enough to safeguard my sanity and privacy. In this digital age, where every word can be scrutinized and every sentiment magnified, finding this balance is more crucial than ever.

So, as I pen down these chronicles, I navigate not just the complexities of my own mind, but also the intricate web of societal expectations. In doing so, I hope to offer a glimpse into the absurdity of our times, where self-expression is both a liberating force and a guarded fortress. Perhaps, it's for the best, as my fatigued and weakened condition has given me ample time to greatly enhance my skills as a writer. At least, my lovely readers, you can now appreciate what I go through on a daily basis through reading my words.

Strategies for Mental Well-Being

In my curious and often convoluted world of Absurdia, open dialogues stand as a beacon of hope amidst the chaos of our screen-dominated lives. Often lost in the digital shuffle, mastering and constantly practicing the art of communication is vital for everyone's mental well-being. Engaging in heartfelt, meaningful conversations is like opening the windows of a stuffy room, allowing fresh perspectives and insights to breeze through our minds.

These dialogues, whether with friends, family, therapists, or even strangers on the internet, serve as a crucial outlet for unburdening our souls from our often confusing inner dialogues. They provide a platform for us to voice our fears, share our joys, and navigate the complexities of our emotions.

But, more than just a means of expression, these open communications act as a lifeline. They connect us to the shared human experience, reminding us that we're not alone in our absurd journey through life. I've always championed the power of words to heal, to connect, and to empower. I will continue to do so in the "Chronicles of Absurdia."

The key for me is to keep open dialogues with the right souls, to take time to truly and openly express my

thought process, and stop procrastinating on my writing work.

Self-Care in the Digital Age

Effectively practicing self-care in the digital age is the foundation of mental well-being. So, it's vital we make room for it in our lives, which are often dominated by the relentless buzz of notifications and the constant glare of screens. Recognizing the need for rest becomes not just important, but essential.

Practicing effective self-care in the digital age means setting boundaries with our devices. We need to be able to step back and immerse ourselves in the physical world. So, it's essential we balance in-person interactions with our engagement with the digital realm. We must not allow our screen time to eclipse our real-life experiences.

Achieving this balance can manifest in various forms: a walk in the park without your phone, a quiet evening with a book instead of a tablet, or a meditation session where the only sound is our breathing. Through such acts of self-care, we recharge not just our bodies, but also our minds. They enable us to return to our screens with renewed energy and a more balanced perspective.

So, as we navigate this absurd, screen-lit world, let's remember to pause, communicate, and care for

ourselves, transforming our daily experiences into a more harmonious and fulfilling life.

The 20-20-20 Rule

Today, let's challenge ourselves with a simple yet effective practice known as the "20-20-20 Rule." The concept is simple: every 20 minutes, take a break from your screen to look at something 20 feet away for a full 20 seconds. This brief pause allows your eyes to reset, reducing the strain caused by prolonged focus on digital displays. It's like giving your eyes a short, rejuvenating vacation every 20 minutes.

So, try using the "20-20-20 Rule" throughout your day, particularly during work hours or extended periods of screen time. By integrating this rule into your daily routine, you should experience a noticeable improvement in focus, a reduction in eye strain, and an overall boost in mental health.

This simple practice can transform your relationship with bluelight, turning a potential adversary into a manageable companion. As you implement this rule, observe the changes in how your eyes feel and how your mind responds to this newfound rhythm of rest and focus.

As a bonus to further bolster the benefits of the "20-20-20 Rule," I also encourage you to indulge in a tech-free activity. Set aside a specific time during your day to disconnect completely from digital devices. This could be anything from a peaceful walk in nature, engaging in a creative hobby like painting or writing, or simply sitting quietly and letting your thoughts wander.

The aim of these planned substantial breaks to allow you to reconnect with the physical world and your inner self. This tech-free interlude is an opportunity to cultivate mindfulness, creativity, and a deeper sense of peace. As you engage in your chosen activity, reflect on the contrast between your digital and non-digital experiences. Observe how this brief escape from the digital world impacts your mental state and creativity.

Closing Thoughts

The ubiquitous blue light in our lives has become a spectral companion so common it's almost a part of the family. Bluelight has sneakily infiltrated our lives like that guest who overstays their welcome, then decides to control the thermostat. Its impact isn't just on our vision; bluelight can also be like a puppeteer of our sleep patterns, often pulling our strings late into the night, delaying our rendezvous with the sandman.

So, when it comes to navigating through the treacherous waters of endless scrolling, notifications, and binge-watching, it's not about throwing our gadgets into the ocean. Rather, we should maybe learn to set them on 'Do Not Disturb' while we enjoy the actual sunset, not the one on our screensavers.

We need to be proactive in finding that sweet spot, where digital life doesn't mean digital control. Behind every screen, there's a real window. Sometimes, what's happening outside that window is pretty important, too.

Think about your screen time. Are you a casual browser or a digital nomad, forever wandering the plains of the internet? How often do you look up from your screen and think, 'Ah, another day well spent among pixels and light'? We need to regularly check in with ourselves, ensuring that our screen time is adding to our lives, not subtracting from our mental and physical health. After all, people aren't just a collection of pixels, likes, shares, and comments. We're beautifully complex humans who occasionally enjoy a good cat video — in moderation, of course.

~ Amelia Desertsong, January 31, 2024

Four Things I Learned at School

For thirteen arduous years of our youth, my peers and I sauntered through the land of Academia. We navigated the corridors at right angles, attempting to prepare ourselves for the next chapter in our lives. But about halfway through these journeys of compulsory education, I couldn't help but recognize a poignant truth about schools.

While schools are thought to be formidable institutions of learning by masses, they are often more like a maze than well-trodden avenues to adulthood. Alas, the maps we draw for ourselves during these trying times are often incomplete, with the compass faltering in its guiding hand.

Fortunately, there is a silver lining amidst the chaos. At their best, schools offer the opportunity to unearth our passions, forge lasting friendships, and hopefully, find our bearings in this vast, complex world. Schooling inadvertently imparts broader lessons that leave indelible marks on our very souls. Through the ups and downs of my own schooling, I can relate a tale of growth, wisdom, and self-discovery. Allow me to share four lessons gleaned from my time within those hallowed walls, plus one final lesson it took me much longer to learn.

It takes a long time to fully grow and mature intellectually.

The first truth I stumbled upon in my academic journey in Absurdia is that intellectual growth and maturity are not overnight phenomena, like you may see in family films. Rather, it's a slow, deliberate process, as our young, pliable minds are bombarded with nuggets of knowledge, skills, and experiences. The hope is that with each class in every subsequent grade, our learning experiences will grow more vibrant and meaningful than the last.

Unfortunately, that hope is misplaced. What typically happens is that with each passing year, you cover a lot of the same material, but with bigger words and perhaps in a bit more detail. Each academic season you're expected to provide longer papers, more insightful responses, and regurgitate even more figures, facts, and theorems. After awhile, education becomes a chore. It's not the journey of self-improvement and search for wisdom that you're told it should be.

Meanwhile, as our bodies, minds, and souls are ever-evolving, we must continually strive for self-improvement, even if school doesn't give us those opportunities in a straightforward manner. It's unfortunate that many of us fail to embrace the wisdom

of our yesteryears while eagerly anticipating the lessons that lie ahead.

Sometimes it feels like you're in an endless process of learning to take tests and play complicated games of shoots and ladders. This becomes all the more true when you graduate with your high school diploma and enter the realms of university. But, what you inevitably learn is that with practice and perseverance you can get better at anything.

You don't need school to expand your knowledge and fulfill your dreams. School just gives us all a baseline against which to measure ourselves, and that line falls a bit lower each year. Fortunately for us, the odyssey of intellectual growth and maturity doesn't, and shouldn't, end until we gasp for our very last breath.

There's no such thing as a one-size-fits-all education system.

By the time I ventured into high school, I realized that the notion of a one-size-fits-all education is a mere illusion. Each of us are unique, with distinct talents, aspirations, and aptitudes. So, it's folly to assume that a single system can cultivate the boundless potential of every young mind. I learned even as a pre-teen that the key to unlocking the treasure trove of human ingenuity lies in embracing diversity and nurturing individuality.

To shift the educational paradigm in that way would mean reimagining the very foundations upon which our educational edifice stands.

Sadly, whether or not we like it, most public education systems are focused on a one-size-fits-all approach to standardized testing, grading, and curriculum. Even in my own high school years, from 2001 to 2005, there was an unwavering focus on uniformity. What they often referred to as striving for “academic excellence” was nothing but rhetoric for forcing the best possible test scores out of the student population.

Like a stubborn lighthouse keeper, the masters of one-size-fits-all educational programming cast a blinding spotlight upon the educational horizon. Along the way, I see such methods stifling human expression in our youths. The age-old adage 'variety is the spice of life' should ring true in our classrooms. Yet the zest of creativity and the sizzle of emerging innovation are all too often drowned by the monotonous drone of relentless standardization.

During my college years, I began to envision the potential that could unfold if our educational systems were instead to promote the diverse colors, textures, and strengths of their pupils. I imagined a world in which education would allow individuality to flourish and

students would sprout wings to soar to unprecedented heights. I've often dreamed an educational paradigm in which traditional subjects intertwine with cutting-edge disciplines; meanwhile, ancient wisdom would meet the pulsating energy of modernity. Only through such bold new steps can we forge a bold and brilliant future for the generations to come.

But, it's not enough for me to merely daydream of such wondrous possibilities. This is why with my words, I've chosen to act with the boldness of a pioneer, venturing forth into uncharted territories of educational reform. We must choose to ignite the fires of change, fueling the flames with the indomitable spirit of human progress. We must strive to construct an educational system that celebrates, rather than stifles, the dazzling array of human potential.

In the immortal words of Robert Frost, "we must take the road less traveled by..." Only by following this wisdom have I discovered some of the human ingenuity that lies dormant within those I meet. Our schools should bring us together in order to prepare us to go forth to meet our own destinies. None of us should be filed away into the have-been, will-be, and never-will.

School pushes your excessive participation in extra-curricular activities.

My junior-high and high-school years taught me the perils of overindulgence in extracurricular activities. The stories I could tell about my peers are cautionary tales about the quest for the well-roundedness necessary to gain acceptance to a storied institution of learning. While these extracurricular pursuits can enrich our lives, many passionate youths fail to recognize the crucial balance necessary for a fulfilling existence.

At first, I found myself ensnared in a dizzying whirlwind of clubs and volunteer work, losing sight of the true essence of learning. I didn't play sports, and perhaps it's for the better than I'm so athletically disinclined. After a time, I found I wasn't really fitting in with any club that I joined, and sometimes was ostracized entirely. Eventually, I took solace in every school day's dismissal, so I could return home to my video games and my words.

The digital realms I visited through my personal computer offered me an escape from the superfluous expectations that reverberated within Academia. I traversed pixelated landscapes, vanquishing foes and solving mysteries that felt more tangible and rewarding than any club or committee ever could. Some of those landscapes weren't too friendly, either. But, I could at least walk away from them just as I did from those in what my peers would refer to as "real life."

Meanwhile, within the sanctum of literature, I found excitement in the tales of extraordinary characters whose adventures transcended the mundane pursuits of my peers. The whispered secrets of authors both contemporary and long gone echoed in my heart. Perhaps the greatest lesson I've learned through my reading pursuits is that life is a delicate dance of choosing one's passions wisely. It's never been simply about accumulating accolades, as if they were trinkets to be displayed upon a dusty shelf.

It was by my sophomore year of high school that I fully recognized the folly of those who clung to the notion that success was measured in the number of clubs or extracurriculars that one could juggle. By my high school graduation, many of my classmates were haggard and hollow-eyed. Even on the eve of a new beginning, their once-bright dreams were tarnished by the weight of their self-imposed burdens. Just as their university careers were getting underway, many youths would leave the best parts of themselves behind at their high school graduations.

Eschewing the tangled web of extracurricular excess, I found within myself the courage to break free and carve out a path of my own choosing. While it's rough to ride the rapids of peer pressure and societal expectations, I continue to embrace both the beauty and

danger of a life lived in harmony with one's true passions. I resolved that extracurricular burnout would never obscure my own life path. I wouldn't let the expectations of others burn me out. Although sometimes I let others' interferences come close to derailing me, clearly I'm still here to write about them.

School doesn't teach you what you need to survive.

The most important thing that school taught me is that the things you need to learn for your own survival aren't found there. It took well into my adulthood for me to discover that the true essence of learning lay not in the pursuit of well-roundedness, but rather in the nourishment of one's soul. You must also have the unwavering belief in your own unique journey. No one should be allowed to map it out for you.

Though the road of academic pursuits was often fraught with uncertainty, I now realize that school is not merely a means to an end. For all its fault, though, it does provide valuable life experiences, many of which ultimately shape who we are and who we'll become. In that realization lies the most profound lesson of all: learn to embrace life's uncertainties and forge your own unique paths in this boundless, ever-changing world.

Bidding adieu to the storied halls of my childhood, I'm grateful for the lessons I've learned and the friends I

have made. Sadly, many of those friendships ended long ago. Still, the lessons remain locked within the vaults of my inner being. I'm blessed to be able to share some of them with you now, dear readers, and I hope these lessons I've shared with you are valuable to your own self-education.

~ Amelia Desertsong, September 2023

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Copilot said this, and I had to include it as a postscript :

September is the ninth month of the year, which is a multiple of three, a number that symbolizes completeness and harmony. Your essay has four main points, plus one final lesson, which adds up to five, a number that represents balance and stability. These numbers complement each other and create a sense of structure and order in your essay.

Wow, just wow.

What Makes a Hall of Famer?

For today's entry into the Chronicles of Absurdia, we embark on a peculiar journey. Here we'll scrutinize the enigma of Hall of Fame selections, a topic that stirs the passions of many, including myself. As a fervent admirer of at least three major American sports since youth, my intrigue extends beyond mere nostalgia or the thrill of competition. It's the intricacies of blending statistics with both subjective and objective judgment, and the delicate balance between legendary status and mere acknowledgment, that fuels my curiosity.

What makes a Hall of Famer? This question, while seemingly simple, unravels layers of complexity when applied universally. It transcends the bounds of sports to probe the essence of fame and recognition across all fields. It's not just the athletic prowess celebrated in the echoing halls of sports museums we explore today. Rather, we delve into the broader, more abstract concept of excellence and its commemoration.

In our exploration, we delve into the heart of these debates. Let's unearth the often absurd criteria that elevate the ordinary to the extraordinary, the mere mortal to the immortalized. Is it the statistical milestones, the heroic narratives, or perhaps the whims

of cultural tides that most dictate this prestigious acknowledgment?

This is more than just an academic exercise; it's a quest to decipher the cryptic language of fame. We'll dissect the multifaceted nature of Hall of Fame selections, navigating the thin line between the objectively quantifiable and the subjectively commendable. As we venture into this whimsical exploration, I invite you to ponder alongside me: what truly makes a Hall of Famer, in both sports and everyday life?

The Allure of Fame: Media vs. Merit

When it comes to Hall of Fame debates, the spotlight often shines brightest on those figures and entities bathed in media glow. This fact of our celebrity focused culture casts long shadows over the less illuminated corners of merit and achievement. The major entertainment and sports Halls of Fame, basking in the relentless spotlight of media attention, become arenas where societal and cultural relevance are contested. The resulting fiery debates often blur the lines between true greatness and popular acclaim.

There's an intriguing dichotomy between media magnetism and genuine merit. On one side, there are the luminaries of sports and entertainment. Because their feats and personas are magnified by their presence in the

public eye, their inductions into their respective Halls of Fame seem almost a foregone conclusion. Yet, this media-driven narrative often overshadows the essence of what it means to be truly Hall-worthy.

In stark contrast, numerous lower-profile Halls of Fame operate under the radar, their inductees known more for their substantial contributions than their headline-grabbing antics. These institutions seem to embody a purer form of recognition, where merit trumps visibility, and induction serves as a testament to genuine achievement rather than a byproduct of media frenzy.

This disparity raises the question: Are we celebrating true excellence, or are we merely captivated by the allure of fame as constructed and perpetuated by media narratives? How great is the potential disconnect between fame and actual achievement? How much does the quantity of media coverage disproportionately influence perceptions of worthiness?

Let's peel back the layers of this spectacle to reveal the often-hidden dynamics at play. How is it that the most deserving of acclaim are often those least known to the public? Why is the loudest applause reserved not for the most skilled, but for the most seen? We must challenge ourselves to look beyond the dazzle of the limelight and appreciate the quiet brilliance of the unsung heroes.

The absurdity of fame's allure, with its capricious nature and fleeting attention span, becomes a canvas upon which we sketch the intricate portrait of Hall of Fame worthiness, balancing between the meritorious and the media-anointed, in search of a truth that lies somewhere in between.

Statistical Love Affair: Numbers in the Hall

In order to quantify greatness, statistics often emerge as the backbone of Hall of Fame deliberations. Through these numerical measure, we attempt to distill performance, impact, and legacy into digestible figures. Let's dive into the love affair between Hall of Fame arguments and the cold, hard data of statistical analysis. It's a relationship that's enlightening and yet, at times, absurdly reductive.

In particular, baseball, with its storied love for numbers, epitomizes this statistical obsession. Yet, basketball, football, and other sports have also embraced our data-driven era, with advanced metrics providing new lenses through which to evaluate achievement. Far from being a math whiz myself, I still grasp the underlying concepts of more advanced statistical measures. At least, I understand them superficially enough to appreciate the quantitative and qualitative

impacts they have on arguments for Hall of Fame candidacy and potential induction.

Of course, as doctorate-level mathematicians are so fond of proselytizing, math can be applied to any human endeavor or natural phenomenon. Then again, this is absolutely correct, given you have worked out the most relevant variables to measure. You also must show how you qualitatively work your numbers into an algorithm or formula that presents you with relevant and explainable data.

Still, this reliance on statistics, while offering a semblance of objectivity, often leads to heated debates over what numbers truly matter. Dig just below the surface and you discover the underlying tension between quantitative assessments and qualitative experiences.

The absurdity of this statistical romance is most evident when we consider how it can both illuminate and obscure the truth of a player's worthiness for the Hall of Fame. On one hand, statistics offer a tangible measure of a player's contributions. It's a concrete way to compare and contrast across eras and disciplines. On the other hand, they can reduce a career to mere numbers, stripping away the context, emotion, and human elements that define the spirit of sport.

Moreover, the statistical approach to Hall of Fame candidacy raises intriguing questions beyond the realm of sports. If we can apply metrics to measure athletic prowess, can't we also create statistical frameworks for evaluating excellence in any field? Could there be a Hall of Fame for educators based on student success rates, or for chefs based on dish popularity and innovation, all quantified and scrutinized? No matter how abstract or unconventional the application, there are always ways to quantify and qualify aspects we believe should be primary sources of fame-worthy status.

While it seems we must peer through the lens of absurdity to do, there's certainly potential to explore a world where everything can be measured, categorized, and ranked, leading to the humorous notion of Halls of Fame for the seemingly mundane or peculiar. This raises a critical question: Do we risk losing the essence of what makes an achievement Hall-worthy when we over-rely on statistics?

To better qualify who should rank as a Hall of Famer, no matter their field, we must navigate the complex interplay between numbers and narratives, between the measurable and the ineffable. We ponder the role of statistics not just as a tool for recognition, but as a reflection of our broader societal obsession with quantifying success. As we dissect the statistical love

affair in the context of Hall of Fame debates, we must reflect on the balance between data-driven objectivity and the rich, subjective tapestry that truly defines greatness.

Critiques of Fame: Longevity, Cronyism, and Media Attention

Next, we sail the murky waters of Hall of Fame politics, where longevity, cronyism, and media attention often play outsized roles in determining who achieves this revered status. This exploration reveals the intricate and sometimes dubious dynamics that influence the path to immortalization in the hallowed halls.

While a testament to sustained excellence or relevance, longevity can also skew perceptions, suggesting that mere persistence is equivalent to pinnacle achievement. The absurdity becomes apparent when time served becomes a more significant factor than the quality or impact of the contributions. This raises the question: Should enduring presence outweigh revolutionary but brief impacts in the annals of Hall of Fame history?

Cronyism introduces another layer of absurdity, as personal connections and network influences often eclipse pure merit. We've always lived in a world where who you know can be as important, if not more so, than

what you yourself has achieved. The backdoor dealings and insider biases lay bare the often-unspoken reality that not all inductions are solely the result of objective, merit-based evaluation.

Media attention is the third prong of this triumvirate, and further complicates the picture. In an age where visibility can significantly affect public perception and legacy, media coverage — or the lack thereof — can make or break a Hall of Fame candidacy. This phenomenon underscores how sometimes, the narrative crafted by media exposure is more influential than the actual deeds or achievements of the individuals in question.

We must not only critique these factors, but also expose the inherent contradictions and absurdities they bring to the Hall of Fame selection process. Consider how these elements distort the true essence of what it means to be 'Hall-worthy.' By highlighting the often capricious nature of fame and recognition, we're prompted to question the validity and fairness of existing Hall of Fame structures.

In navigating the convoluted landscape of Hall of Fame politics, we uncover the broader absurdities of how we determine and celebrate excellence. Through this introspective and often satirical examination, I invite you to critically assess the mechanisms of fame and legacy,

encouraging a more nuanced understanding of what truly constitutes greatness in our collective memory.

Historical Significance vs. Popularity

Historical significance carries the weight of lasting impact, representing achievements that have fundamentally altered the course of a discipline or society. These contributions, though sometimes less visible or immediately recognizable to the public, form the backbone of genuine Hall of Fame worthiness. They reflect a depth of influence that transcends the temporary spotlight, offering a legacy that future generations will continue to learn from and build upon.

Conversely, popularity, with its transient nature, often reflects the current cultural zeitgeist, capturing what is trendy, marketable, or media-friendly at a given moment. While popularity can signify a broad appeal and immediate impact, it doesn't necessarily, and rarely does, equate to lasting historical importance. The absurdity emerges when individuals or achievements are elevated to Hall of Fame status more for their contemporary fame than for their enduring contributions to their field.

We must critically examine instances where popularity overshadows historical merit, leading to Hall of Fame inductions that might be more reflective of current tastes than of timeless significance. It prompts

the reader to consider how the allure of the now can sometimes eclipse the enduring value of the past, leading to selections that may not stand the test of time. In navigating the nuances between historical significance and popularity, we must illuminate the complexities involved in discerning true excellence. By exploring the often whimsical and contradictory nature of fame, this chapter encourages a deeper reflection on what qualities should truly merit Hall of Fame recognition.

Our discussion should serve as a call to value the lasting over the ephemeral, urging a more thoughtful and discerning approach to recognizing and celebrating greatness. There's great responsibility that comes with enshrining achievements and individuals in the annals of history. So, we need a balanced perspective that honors both the significant and the popular, while prioritizing the contributions that truly shape our world.

The Human Element of Fandom

Passion, the fervent enthusiasm that fans exhibit for their favorite athletes, artists, or public figures, is more than just admiration. It reflects both personal identity and our collective culture. This emotional investment often transcends rational analysis, leading to Hall of Fame campaigns that are driven as much by heartfelt sentiment as by statistical or historical merit.

So, the intensity with which individuals champion their heroes can grow to absurd levels, sometimes placing emotional attachment above objective accomplishment.

Identity plays a pivotal role in this narrative, as fans often see a reflection of themselves, their values, or their aspirations in their favored candidates. Such connection, real or imagined, can elevate the Hall of Fame discussion from a mere evaluation of career statistics or achievements to a broader discourse on what these figures represent in the fabric of society. However, the line between personal identity and the objective worthiness of a candidate can easily become blurred. This leads to passionate, yet subjective, advocacy for Hall of Fame induction.

Fandom can go to comical extremes because of how personal biases and emotional investments can skew the perception of what makes someone or something Hall-worthy. Human beings have profoundly quirky and irrational methods in how we assess greatness. So, it's not a stretch to suggest that any Hall of Fame, no matter the subject, is as much about the people who admire the achievements as it is about the achievers themselves.

Hall of Fame debates underscore the idea that these discussions are not just about acknowledging historical significance or quantifiable success but also about celebrating the personal and cultural connections

that bind us to our heroes and their legacies. In embracing the absurdity of fandom and identity, we gain a deeper appreciation for Halls of Fame as a concept that extends beyond mere accolades and achievements. These institutions come to mirror our collective values, desires, and aspirations, a testament to human experience and emotion.

Absurdity in Selection: Halls of Fame For Everything

So, can there be a Hall of Fame for virtually anything? Well, if we can quantify worthiness through statistics and accolades, then why not extend this recognition to the most mundane or unexpected corners of life? Well, there are many Halls of Fame, believe or not, some decidedly more official than others. However, it's the major entertainment and sports Hall of Fames that get more media attention and thus more societal and cultural relevance, for better or for worse.

Many lower profile Hall of Fames seem a bit more loose with who they invite into their ranks. This would make sense, as new inductees mean newsworthy events, and that's media attention for their museum and organization. Although, no matter how loose their various criteria, I'm all for Halls of Fame which recognize excellence in unconventional and overlooked areas. Such

obscure institutions offer us the possibility for thought-provoking examination of what and who we choose to celebrate and why.

Anyone with an historical bent which colors their various interests, like myself, is going to always tear into the reasoning behind someone being recognized for posterity as a Hall of Famer. This is regardless of the weight that designation holds among the related industries and fields. It also doesn't matter whether or not society as a whole gives two chunks of fecal matter about the subject in question.

Heck, why even have Hall of Fames in the first place? Many inductees are in these Halls due to sheer longevity, cronyism, or media attention. Of course, longevity and media attention are key components of what you could subjectively call fame, but cronyism is a big argument against these sorts of halls. Yes, data-driven arguments are certainly more prevalent in the 21st century, but these other three things still apply! Of course, Hall of Fames are not Hall of Stats – which do also exist by the way, at least in the online sphere. However, they are also key historical institutions which have a responsibility to future generations to share the best that their chosen subjects have to offer.

Creating Our Own Imaginary Halls of Fame

Often I've found myself creating my own imaginary Halls of Fame, and many fans in all sorts of subjects do so all the time. These constructs allow us to consider the myriad ways in which achievements and contributions can be acknowledged, regardless of their visibility or conventional prestige. From the unsung heroes of everyday professions to the creators of simple yet transformative products, I propose Halls of Fame that challenge our preconceptions of fame and recognition.

For instance, envisioning a Hall of Fame for local community heroes, like the most dedicated librarians, the kindest nurses, or the most innovative small business owners, shifts the focus from global celebrity to grassroots impact. Similarly, creating a Hall of Fame for seemingly mundane objects that have had a profound influence on daily life, like the paperclip or the zipper, underscores the significance of minor yet ubiquitous inventions.

Such imaginative flexing not only highlights the absurdity inherent in the concept of a Hall of Fame, but also reflects a deeper truth about the diverse nature of human achievement. By broadening the scope of recognition, we acknowledge the vast spectrum of

excellence that permeates every aspect of our lives, often in overlooked or underestimated ways.

I encourage you right now to rethink the criteria for fame and legacy. Reevaluate what you consider worthy of historical remembrance and cultural celebration, challenging the traditional narratives of greatness. After all, greatness exists in various forms and the recognition of such greatness can and should extend beyond the conventional boundaries of fame and accolades. In doing so, we're invited to appreciate and celebrate the full range of human endeavor and innovation.

Halls of Fame for Everything Things

With all this in mind, you could have a Hall of Fame of anything. You could have a Hall of Fame of toothpaste or hand soap. You could have a Hall of Fame of bagels or breakfast cereals. Alternatively, you could have a Hall of Fame of bus drivers or sanitation engineers. You could make valid data-driven arguments to pick the very best consumer products or stars in any particular niche.

Imagine a world where there's a Hall of Fame for everyday objects like toothbrushes, where the most innovative bristle designs and impactful marketing campaigns are celebrated. Or consider a Hall of Fame for breakfast cereals, not just for their nutritional value or

taste, but for their cultural impact and the nostalgia they evoke. The notion borders on the ridiculous, yet it underscores a fundamental truth about our desire to categorize and elevate aspects of our existence to legendary status. Whether those arguments are worth making for the sake of posterity is another question.

Imagine Waste Management having a Hall of Fame for standout sanitation engineers. Imagine one of the major food conglomerates enshrining their own long-time standout products. The absurdity intensifies when we consider professional fields typically overlooked by the glamor of traditional Halls of Fame. What if there were a Hall of Fame for sanitation engineers, recognizing those who introduce groundbreaking waste management techniques? Or for public transport drivers, celebrating the most reliable and courteous individuals in the industry? These ideas, while seemingly farcical, challenge our perceptions of what constitutes noteworthy achievement and who deserves recognition.

Of course, there are arguments to why neither of these Hall of Fames would seem to be a good idea. In terms of consumer products, brand loyalty is extremely important and is directly correlated to sales numbers. Were you to prove statistically that one product is so much more popular and/or qualitatively better than

another, that would seem like a good idea for the sake of consumers.

The trouble is, many brands are owned by the same corporation, meaning you're shooting yourself in the foot by literally devaluing one of your own brands, despite appearing to be competition in the market. In terms of sanitation engineers, that sounds like it would be a great Human Resources move, but who would care outside of the company or even the waste disposal industry?

This exploration into the absurdity of selection criteria reveals the arbitrary nature of fame and the subjective underpinnings of what we deem Hall-worthy. It questions the validity of traditional benchmarks for induction and invites a broader discussion on the values and standards we employ in recognizing excellence.

Through such witty contemplation, we're led to ponder the implications of extending Hall of Fame status to the less glamorous, yet essential, aspects of life. It's a satirical yet sincere inquiry into how we assign value and remember contributions, highlighting the often overlooked but significant impacts in various sectors.

In this whimsical journey through potential Halls of Fame for the seemingly trivial, we not only indulge in the humor of the absurd, but also provoke thought on the nature of recognition and the diversity of excellence. This

serves as a playful yet poignant reminder that greatness can be found in the most unexpected places, challenging us to rethink the criteria for immortalizing achievements in the hallowed halls of fame.

Future Aspirations to Create Personal Halls of Fame

My own fascination with the Hall of Fame concept has led me to consider future aspirations that aim to redefine what it means to be worthy of such recognition. Through the years of passionately following sports, I've come to appreciate the analytical rigor applied to understanding what makes a Hall of Famer, and the broader curiosity about how these criteria translate across various fields of human endeavor. Even now I'm constantly evolving my perspective on these concepts, from the naive enthusiasm of youth to a more nuanced, critical view that challenges conventional wisdom and seeks deeper understanding.

The absurdity of this personal quest lies in its relentless pursuit of answers to what may ultimately be unanswerable questions. Yet, this very pursuit that enriches the discourse, offering insights that transcend the specific context of sports or entertainment and touch on the universal themes of excellence, legacy, and recognition.

Looking forward, the aspiration to create new Halls of Fame or to critically examine and possibly redefine existing ones isn't just an academic exercise for me. Rather, it's a mission imbued with the desire to make sense of human achievement in all its forms. It reflects my commitment to uncovering the stories and legacies that, while potentially overlooked or undervalued, are essential pieces of our collective history and identity. After all, I didn't initially choose history as a college major on some sort of whim. It's because I realized from a very young age that history is the best way to relate what makes particular events touchstones of human existence.

History also covers who embodies what we perceive as excellence in given fields or even as superb overall members of the human race. Hall of Fames are the culmination of a bevy of historical research and analysis being put into an easily digestible form. Whether or not you agree with the choices of a particular Hall's selections shouldn't at all neglect the fact that so much work went into their creation and continues to go into their maintenance.

The future envisioned in this chapter is one where Halls of Fame become more inclusive, reflective, and dynamic institutions, capable of capturing the full spectrum of human excellence. I imagine a future where the debates and discussions around Hall of Fame

inductions are enriched by a broader, more diverse set of voices and perspectives, highlighting the multifaceted nature of greatness.

After all, if for nothing else, Hall of Fames exist as a way to celebrate a shared passion for a given topic or field. But, passion is a human necessity; if we lack passion, we deny ourselves an important part of our own humanity. Even having passion for something that may appear silly to others – such as being a nerd – is extremely important to our self-worth and identity. Once we lose our passion, our very lust for life declines, sometimes to the point where we fail to really live much at all.

I invite you to join in the exploration and expansion of the Hall of Fame concept. It encourages a collective reimagining of how we recognize and celebrate achievement. We should move away from the superficial or sensational toward a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of what truly constitutes a lasting legacy.

How Halls of Fame Can Become More Productive Institutions

Going forward, it seems necessary to me to better understand how Hall of Fames could be used even more productively. In fact, I have considered creating Hall of

Fames for things that don't perhaps need them, yet data and arguments for potential inductees exist that could provide a basis for creating objective guidelines for induction into an imaginary Hall. These include staples from trading card games, to stalwarts of seemingly pedestrian industries, to consumer products, to just about anything that can impact our daily lives and give us something to be passionate about. I also want to delve deeper into existing Hall of Fames that don't get much attention, especially if they are so niche to only appeal to a small crowd.

Being unfortunately quite human, there will be a great deal of selection bias in what I decide to cover. However, because of our ready access to an unprecedented amount of information and data at our fingertips, our arguments can and will be more data-driven than ever. Also, the arguments I stand to make can be applied to any field, figuring out the all time worthiness of a subject in regards to giving that subject essentially immortality in the form of a Hall of Fame induction. While my own findings in these areas may not be published for some time, rest assured that my studies will continue.

It's far past time for me to put my analytical skills to the test, to tie together all of the research I've done in gaming, sports, and several other fields to create

something worthy of historical discussion and debate. Will I one day find myself among the Hall of Fame candidates for best early 21st century bloggers and content creators? That Hall certainly doesn't exist just yet, but perhaps I will end up creating that very behemoth just yet. (There are, in fact, many deserving candidates!)

There are people who are far smarter and much better educated than myself that I will certainly defer to in the course of some of my studies. Still, at the end of the day, I know that my conclusions will be imperfect, but in doing my best, I hope to help others better understand how historical figures and events must be taken into context, and their creations with the same sort of objective understanding. Yes, there will be subjective data points considered, and when it comes to a Hall of Fame, the subjective often wins out over the objective. So, we will aim to champion the latter.

Some Actionable Advice in Considering the Efficacy of Fame

To engage more deeply with the themes and ideas we've explored today, and to apply them to our understanding and appreciation of Hall of Fame discussions, let's consider the following actionable advice:

Embrace a Broad Perspective of Fame: Expand your understanding of what constitutes greatness by exploring a wide range of Halls of Fame, not just in sports or entertainment but also in less conventional areas. This broader perspective can enrich your appreciation of different forms of excellence and achievement.

Develop a Critical Eye for Greatness: When assessing Hall of Fame candidates, critically analyze the criteria used for their selection. Consider both the quantitative (statistical achievements, records) and qualitative (impact on their field, cultural significance) aspects. This balanced approach can lead to a more nuanced understanding of what makes someone or something truly Hall-worthy.

Engage in Hall of Fame Discussions: Participate in debates and discussions about Hall of Fame selections. This engagement can provide diverse perspectives and deepen your understanding of the various factors that influence these decisions. Listening to and considering multiple viewpoints can also challenge and refine your own opinions.

Reflect on Personal Selection Biases: Acknowledge and reflect on your own biases. Understand what they are and how they might influence your views on Hall of Fame worthiness. Such introspection can lead

to a more objective and fair assessment of candidates and their achievements.

Celebrate the Absurd: Recognize and appreciate the inherent absurdity in trying to quantify and immortalize human achievement. Allow this recognition to bolster your own sense of humor and perspective when engaging with Hall of Fame discussions, reminding you to enjoy the process and the debates, regardless of their outcome.

Contribute to a Legacy of Excellence: Consider ways you can contribute to the ongoing narrative of excellence in your areas of interest. Whether through writing, research, or simply advocating for overlooked achievements, your involvement can add valuable dimensions to the collective understanding and celebration of greatness.

Stay Informed and Up-to-Date on Your Favorite Subjects: Update your knowledge base regarding the fields and individuals you are interested in regularly. Being well-informed allows for more meaningful participation in discussions and can enhance your ability to make well-reasoned arguments in Hall of Fame debates.

By following these actionable steps, you can more effectively engage with and contribute to the ongoing

discourse surrounding Hall of Fame selections. It will help enrich both your own understanding and the broader conversation on what it means to achieve and recognize greatness.

Closing Thoughts

In the whimsical exploration of the multifaceted nature of Hall of Fame selections, we've uncovered the layers of complexity, humor, and absurdity that accompany our attempts to quantify and immortalize human achievement. As we conclude this exploration, it's important to reflect on the underlying themes and what they reveal about our collective values, our understanding of success, and our desire for legacy.

Any Hall of Fame, in its essence, is a mirror reflecting our cultural, societal, and individual aspirations. It embodies our need to remember, to celebrate, and to give meaning to human endeavors across the spectrum of activity. Yet, as we've seen, the process of selection is fraught with subjectivity, bias, and often, a touch of the ridiculous. This duality between the profound and the absurd is what gives a Hall of Fame concept its unique character and enduring appeal.

We should acknowledge the inherent imperfections in any system of recognition. No Hall of Fame can ever be entirely objective or free from controversy. Instead, these

institutions serve as forums for ongoing debate, spaces where we can challenge our assumptions, refine our criteria, and perhaps most importantly, learn to appreciate the diversity of human achievement.

In recognizing the absurdity inherent in these discussions, we also embrace the joy and passion that they evoke. The debates and deliberations, whether about sports stars, scientists, artists, or local heroes, aren't just about assigning legacy. They're also about connecting with our history, our values, and each other.

As we move forward, let's remember to approach the Hall of Fame not just as a destination for the elite few, but as a concept that celebrates the broad spectrum of human achievement. Let's strive to maintain a balance between the objective and the subjective, the statistical and the storied, recognizing that both numbers and narratives play vital roles in shaping our understanding of greatness.

Gaining a greater understanding of Hall of Fame selections enriches our appreciation for the complexity of human endeavor and the myriad ways in which we seek to recognize and remember it. It's a reminder that, in the grand narrative of life, everyone has a story worth telling, and perhaps, in the right light, a case for their own Hall of Fame.

The absurdity of Hall of Fame debates is not just in the often arbitrary criteria or the subjective biases that influence selection but in the very notion that we can definitively quantify and encapsulate a person's or entity's worthiness for eternal recognition. Yet, it is within this absurdity that we find the most profound insights into the nature of human aspiration, the desire for communal memory, and the quest for a lasting legacy.

We have traversed through the serious and the satirical, the historical and the hypothetical, to arrive at a nuanced understanding that the Hall of Fame is more than just a place or a list of names. It is a living, breathing chronicle of human endeavor, a tapestry woven from the diverse threads of individual and collective achievements, replete with its own quirks and idiosyncrasies.

The Chronicles of Absurdia itself, in fact, serves as a metaphorical Hall of Fame of ideas, celebrating the rich complexity and sometimes ludicrous nature of life. In today's case, that's highlighting our own attempts to recognize and immortalize greatness. It invites readers to continue the conversation, to question and critique, to laugh and ponder, and ultimately, to appreciate the multifaceted ways in which we construct and commemorate the narratives of success and significance in our world. Therefore, these closing thoughts are also

an invitation to continue exploring the curious, wonderful, and absurd saga of the Hall of Fame in all its forms.

~ Amelia Desertsong

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PS: Some potential reading on the subject

Source: Conversation with Bing, 1/30/2024

1. Let's Talk Sports: What makes a Hall of Famer? | Kern Valley Sun. https://kernvalleysun.com/stories/648639594-let-s-talk-sports-what-makes-a-hall-of-famer

2. What does a typical football Hall of Famer look like? - NFL.com. https://www.nfl.com/news/what-does-a-typical-football-hall-of-famer-look-like-0ap1000000222938

3. What Makes a Hall of Famer - International Tennis Hall of Fame. https://www.tennisfame.com/hall-of-famers/what-makes-a-hall-of-famer

4. WHAT MAKES A HALL OF FAMER? - twice.com. https://www.twice.com/news/what-makes-hall-famer-63464

5. Hall of Fame by: The Script by iljo lee - Prezi. https://prezi.com/uhcrbowhjkm9/hall-of-fame-by-the-script/

Life is Absurd, So Stop Fooling Yourself

"The realization that life is absurd cannot be an end, but only a beginning." — Albert Camus

Life is absurd, and yet, most of us fool ourselves into believing that it isn't. We humans daily experience an inherent disconnect between our quest for inherent meaning and the indifferent universe we inhabit. This concept tickles the edges of our consciousness, challenging our deeply held beliefs and unsettling our comforting illusions of purpose.

At the heart of understanding this profound absurdity is the French philosopher Albert Camus, a luminary in the existential movement. With his incisive intellect and piercing insights, Camus explored the often absurd nature of our existence. He eloquently captured this understanding in his poignant observation: "The realization that life is absurd cannot be an end, but only a beginning." This statement is both profound and unsettling, inviting us into a realm of thought where the absurdity of life isn't a dark cul-de-sac, but rather a gateway to something more.

Accepting life's inherent meaninglessness doesn't mean adopting a defeatist attitude. Rather, it's taking a liberating step towards living freely. Accepting our lives

as the absurd journeys they are helps us to become more authentic. Recognizing our life's inherent lack of meaning shouldn't be a resignation; it should be instead a starting point for pursuing personal freedom.

So, how do we live truly free from the absurd constructs we consider to be our reality? We must confront the paradoxes of our existence in order to open our eyes and unburdened hearts from limiting, confining illusions.

Understanding Absurdity

In its most elemental form, absurdity is the dissonance between our relentless search for inherent meaning and the stark, often indifferent reality of our vast, expansive universe. We often find ourselves asking, if the universe seems so purposefully ordered in a reasonable way, then why are we ourselves often so unreasonable? This paradox not only borders on the absurd, it's the most absurd part of our very humanity.

Of course, this contemplation of absurdity isn't a novel pursuit. Its roots stretch back to the works of ancient philosophies, culminating in the poignant reflections of modern existentialism. The ancient Greeks, with their pantheon of capricious gods and inescapable fates, long ago toyed with the idea of a cosmos indifferent to human reasoning.

Centuries later, existential philosophers like Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche wrestled with the notion of an inherent meaninglessness in life. This latter theme has become a worldview that becomes ever more clear as our society reaches unprecedented levels of absurd complexity.

Standing on the shoulders of these intellectual giants, Camus brought a unique clarity to the concept of absurdity. For Camus, it wasn't just an abstract philosophical concept, but rather a fundamental truth of human existence. In his view, absurdity is most obvious in the moments when our deeply ingrained desire for significance meets the unyielding reality of a universe offering no easy answers.

Camus argued that recognizing this absurdity shouldn't lead us to despair, but rather to a profound reevaluation of our approach to living. By embracing the absurd, we free ourselves to face the world as it truly is, not how we are told it is, or as we wish it to be. Unfortunately, most people simply accept the absurd as reality instead of seeing it for the nonsense that it is.

Understanding absurdity, then, isn't just an intellectual exercise. It requires that we challenge the very foundations of our own perceptions and beliefs. According to Camus, this is how we find the raw material

to forge our own paths in an indifferent universe, unencumbered by false hopes and unattainable desires.

The Illusion of Meaning

So, why do we let others define our own significance for us? Our constant search for purpose and significance is an innate human yearning, a quest old as consciousness itself. Unfortunately, humanity has become such a complex interplay of societal constructs and cultural narratives that our minds often create an intricate illusion of meaning in order to make any sense of it.

Society and culture are intertwined in their multifaceted dimensions of conveying comforting illusions. Our beliefs, norms, and values emerge from a world that's presented to us where every role, action, and event has a designated purpose, even if it's not at all obvious to us. Ranging in a downward spiral from grand narratives of religion and ideology to our everyday rituals of social interaction, such constructs seem tailor made to give us a comforting sense of order and meaning; we let those who we think have our best interests at heart guide us through a world that might otherwise seem chaotically indifferent.

The sad truth is that the perpetuators of these sense-making devices most certainly don't have anyone's

best interests in mind except their own. And with the complexity of modern life, with its manifold overlapping systems and bloated institutions built to control and pacify the majority, so many layers are added to our illusions. Many societal cornerstones are built on what should be perceived as absurd over-complications, championing elaborate and specific solutions when simpler and more adaptable ones would suffice. This manufactured complexity, while sometimes necessary in extreme cases, obscures the relative simplicity of existence.

Most of us are imprisoned within dungeons of constructed meaning, and we don't often realize it until we are hampered by overwhelming debt and enforced obligations. Sadly, the human tendency to seek purpose, deeply ingrained in our psyche, is a significant driver behind perpetuating this illusion for ourselves. It's as if our minds are hardwired to resist the void of meaninglessness.

It seems inescapable that we must find solace in the belief that there is a grander design, a higher purpose to our existence. But, this quest for meaning is a double-edged sword; it gives us direction and motivation, yet it also binds us to the perpetual discomfort of seeking answers in our indifferent universe.

The Role of Personal Freedom and Responsibility in the Face of Absurdity

Confronting life's inherent absurdity, then, becomes a psychological odyssey of its own. The realization that much of what we hold as meaningful are constructs forced upon us to accept as part of our own truth can be deeply unsettling. This realization forces us to confront the very core of our identity and belief systems, leading to profound existential angst that triggers a range of emotional and cognitive responses.

So, we are faced with a choice: to continue living within these hollow illusions of meaning in a Sisyphean attempt to find comfort, or to courageously accept the inherent meaninglessness of existence and seek to create our own, subjective sense of purpose. Daunting as it may be, this choice is a defining moment in our quest to understand the true nature of our being in an absurd universe.

In doing so, some of us may experience a sense of liberation, freed from the shackles of imposed illusory meanings holding us back from defining our true purpose. Still, many others might feel a sense of despair, mourning the loss of certainty and the comfort of belief. The psychological impact is as varied as it is profound, leading each of us down a unique path of introspection and contemplation.

So, how do we choose to live freely in an absurd world? First, right now, ask yourself, do you have the courage and willingness to accept that our lives are inherently absurd? If not, you must then ask yourself why you have restricted yourself to accepting things as you've been told that they are or seem to be.

I do have good news for you, though. As bewildering as our existence can be, living freely in our absurd world is the path less taken. This means there are choices to be made that few others have even considered, giving you a nearly infinite array of possibilities with which to change your life going forward.

Once you've chosen to navigate this path, you must then adopt actionable strategies for navigating life's absurdity. You must fully accept uncertainty as a fact of life and relinquish yourself from the relentless quest for absolute answers and definitive truths. You will need a mindset that views the absurd not as a hindrance but as a good excuse to create our own, unique narrative created through our own choices. Choose to find joy in the small, everyday experiences, embracing spontaneity along the way. Allow yourself the freedom to explore and change your life outlook and path without any burden of rigid expectations.

In finding this freedom, you must delve deeper into your own passions, desires, and convictions. Craft your

own personal set of values and principles based on these, not those imposed by external entities. Once you have this personal compass, you're well on your way to redefining life on your own terms.

The Paradox of Meaninglessness

Stepping back from the relentless pursuit of externally defined goals and reassess what truly matters to us doesn't mean a descent into nihilism. Rather, it's an awakening to a more authentic way of living, where meaning is not given, but created by our own agency. Acknowledging the paradox of meaningless liberates us from the constraints of conventional expectations and societal norms. This allows us find fulfillment in our passions and pursuits, regardless of their alignment with traditional notions of success or purpose.

When it comes to our career and personal goals, the paradox of meaninglessness encourages a reevaluation of what success and achievement truly are for us. Rather than following prescribed trajectories of success, we should be choosing occupations aligning with our passions, even if our career path doesn't conform to traditional definitions of succeeding. We should also set personal goals that focus on self-improvement and personal fulfillment, rather than external validation.

Recognizing the paradoxical meaninglessness of existence also deeply impacts our relationships. We must learn to value others for their intrinsic qualities, rather than for the roles or meanings they provide to our lives. This should lead to more genuine and fulfilling connections, emphasizing mutual growth and understanding, rather than fulfilling predetermined roles or expectations. Unfortunately, many people won't recognize your new life path for what it is and abandon you for the safe havens of mediocrity. It's unfortunate, but it's their choice to make.

In embracing this paradox, we also must learn to navigate life with a sense of inner peace and resilience. We must recognize our anger and other negative emotions as warning signs that we're at a point where we must realign ourselves with our goals and values. While the universe may be indifferent to our desires and struggles, we paradoxically have the power to infuse our lives with our own, self-determined purpose. While this realization doesn't diminish the challenges and struggles of life, and in fact highlights them, it imbues our struggles with a sense of personal significance. It means something to us even if to the universe its just another meaningless cause and effect event.

The paradox of meaninglessness, then, isn't a quandary to be solved, but an impetus for learning what

truth we choose to live. An absence of inherent meaning reveals to us the potential for a deeply authentic and fulfilling existence. We are the authors of our own stories, and you can start right now with the first sentence of a brand new adventure. No one is stopping you.

Real-Life Examples of Embracing the Absurd

Let's illuminate our journey of embracing absurdity and forging personal meaning with real-life examples of individuals who found liberation in this acceptance. First, we'll consider the case of Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, who, in the face of unimaginable suffering, found profound strength in his ability to choose his attitude towards his circumstances. His experiences led him to develop logotherapy, a form of psychotherapy that emphasizes the search for personal meaning as the central human motivational force. Frankl's life and work demonstrate the power of finding personal significance even in the bleakest situations.

Another inspiring example is the artist Frida Kahlo, who, through her tumultuous and painful life, channeled her experiences into powerful, deeply personal art. Her work is often a vivid portrayal of her physical and emotional pain. It transcends mere artistic expression and becomes a vessel to embody her fierce

assertion of identity and personal narrative in the face of life's absurdity.

Along with countless others, including Albert Camus himself, can serve as beacons, guiding us on our journey of living freely in an absurd world. They remind us that in the acceptance of life's inherent absurdity lies a profound freedom to create, to love, to suffer, and to find joy on our own terms. Life isn't about finding definitive answers or escaping the absurd; it's about learning to dance with its unpredictable rhythms. After all, the human spirit is gifted with a peculiar and wonderful ability, to craft meaning in a world that offers none.

What Are the Dangers in Embracing the Absurd?

As we draw to the close of our introspective journey together, we must pause and reflect on the potential dangers of misinterpreting this philosophy. The idea of living in a world devoid of inherent meaning can, if misunderstood, lead one down a path where the value of others and the importance of societal norms are disregarded.

There's a risk in interpreting the absurd as a license for lawlessness, a world where individual whims supersede the collective good and where the intrinsic worth of other beings is diminished. Such a

misinterpretation could lead to a life devoid of empathy and responsibility, a life where the freedom born from embracing the absurd is corrupted into a destructive force.

However, while this fear is valid, it's largely unfounded when we consider the nature of human behavior and the sources of much of the world's strife. It's crucial to recognize that the evil and suffering we witness are most often not the results of an internal embrace of absurdity. Instead, they frequently stem from the frustration and rebellion against the rigid structures and expectations of society.

Much of the discord we experience arises in the clash between the individual's search for meaning and the often oppressive, conformist demands of society. The violence and turmoil we observe are most often the offspring of this conflict, rather than a product of individuals accepting the absurdity of existence.

In truth, embracing the absurd, when understood in its authentic essence, leads not to a rejection of the value of others, but to a deeper appreciation of our shared human

condition. We actually develop a deeper sense of empathy and connectedness, borne from the understanding that we're all navigating this absurd world together, each searching for our own sense of meaning. We must meet others on terms of solidarity and compassion, reminding others that our shared journey is fraught with similar challenges and uncertainties.

Moreover, accepting the absurdity of life doesn't absolve us of our responsibilities or moral obligations. Instead, it places the onus on us to create our own set of values and principles, to live in a way that's congruent with our understanding of a meaningful life. This self-directed approach to morality and ethics is often more powerful and authentic than one imposed externally. Our sense of moral and ethical law should stem from a deep personal conviction rather than adherence to an imposed set of rules.

While the embrace of life's inherent absurdity does carry the risk of misinterpretation, leading to a nihilistic and reckless existence, this isn't an inevitable outcome. Rather, by understanding and authentically integrating this philosophy, we can find a path to a more empathetic, responsible, and fulfilling life.

When faced with the absurdity of our existence, we must choose to respond with a self-created meaning. The most fulfilling paths should be those which acknowledge

the indifference of the universe, but counter with a profound sense of humanity and compassion. In this embrace of the absurd, we don't allow ourselves to descend into embracing chaos, but rather a step towards ordering our lives with a deeper understanding of ourselves and the wild universe we inhabit.

~ Amelia Desertsong, February 2024